

THIRD EDITION.



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October 9, 1888.

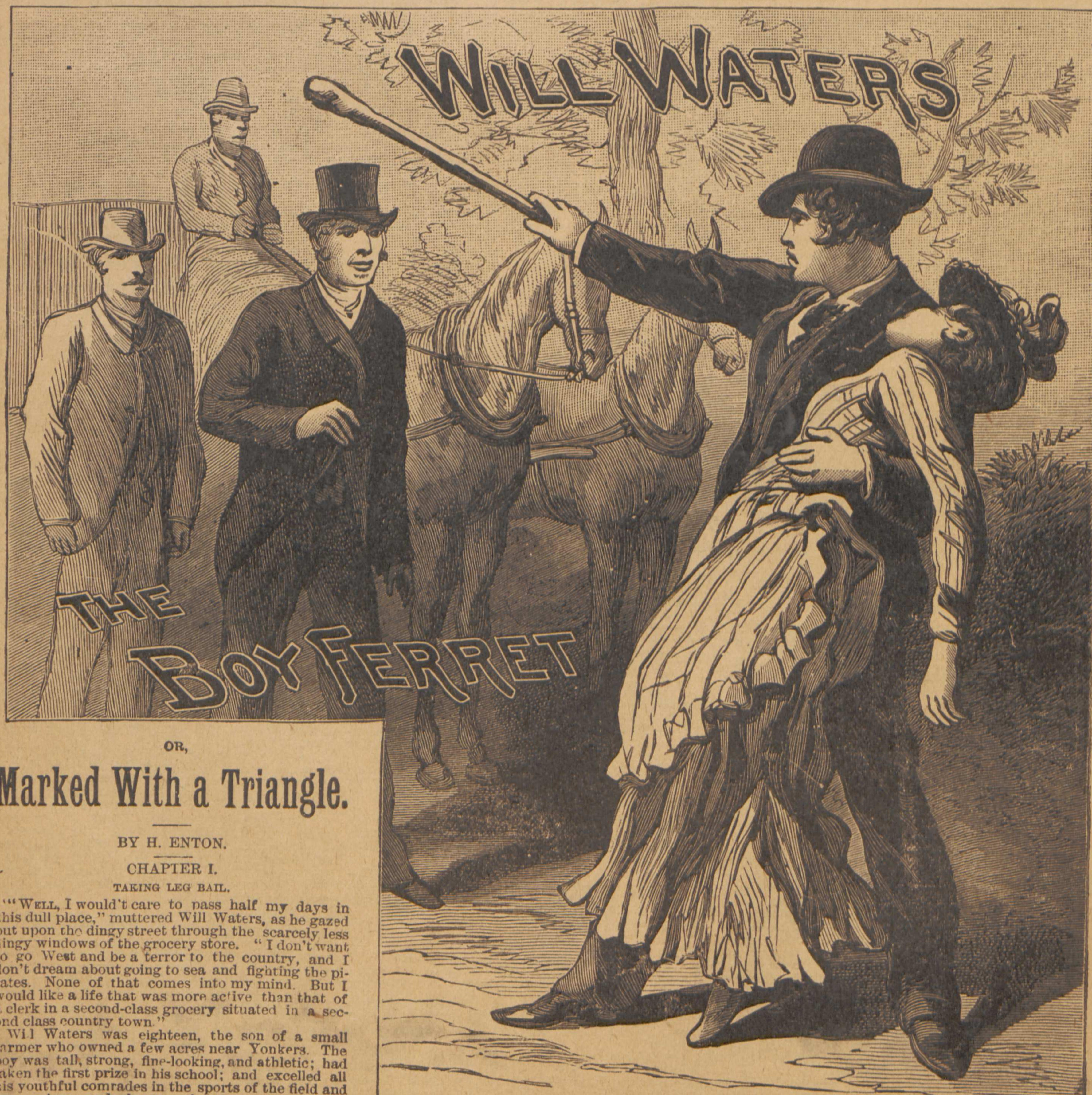
No. 585.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

Vol. XXIII.



OR,
Marked With a Triangle.

BY H. ENTON.

CHAPTER I.

TAKING LEG BAIL.

"WELL, I would care to pass half my days in this dull place," muttered Will Waters, as he gazed out upon the dingy street through the scarcely less dingy windows of the grocery store. "I don't want to go West and be a terror to the country, and I don't dream about going to sea and fighting the pirates. None of that comes into my mind. But I would like a life that was more active than that of a clerk in a second-class grocery situated in a second class country town."

Will Waters was eighteen, the son of a small farmer who owned a few acres near Yonkers. The boy was tall, strong, fine-looking, and athletic; had taken the first prize in his school; and excelled all his youthful comrades in the sports of the field and gymnasium, and always evinced a general superiority over his fellows.

No wonder, then, that this young lad was intense

"STAND BACK!" CRIED WILL, RAISING ALOFT THE HEAVY CANE. "THIS YOUNG LADY HAS ASKED ME TO SAVE HER FROM YOU, AND I WILL."

ly disgusted when his father compelled him to go to work as a clerk in a mean grocery store in Yonkers, where he measured up sugar, rice and various other things, with a very rebellious heart under the eyes of a very tyrannical employer.

"I'm made for something better than this life," said Will, as he gazed moodily out through the window.

The hand of the grocer came down sharply upon his shoulder, and he turned to meet his employer's eye. The latter was evidently angry, and his sullen face was flushed.

"I want that money!" he said in that confident style adopted by people who think they are positive.

"Eh?" said Will.

"I want that money," slowly repeated the grocer.

"Mr. Morris, what money do you mean?" the boy asked.

"That twenty dollars," with a reckless disregard of grammar.

"You gave me no twenty dollars, sir," declared the astonished lad.

"No I know I didn't; but you took it out of the drawer," angrily retorted Morris, while his wife, a good mate for him, looked on approvingly.

"That is false!" cried Will.

"Oh, of course," put in Mrs. Morris. "You know it's false. The money was put in the back of the till; you were the only one behind the counter, and the money is gone. Of course you don't know anything about it—you thief!"

"Madame!" cried Will, the hot blood rushing to his face.

"Yes, I repeat it, you thief!" repeated the woman, spitefully. "You look like a thief, and I've always suspected you."

"And you are a thief," snapped Morris.

That is where he went just a trifle too far in the matter.

Will Waters was a gladiator by nature, and his movements were lightning-like. The woman he could not retaliate upon, but the man presented a source from which he could derive satisfaction.

The grocer had scarcely uttered the degrading words, "And you are a thief," ere Will struck him a terrible blow on the eye, and sent him flying backward over boxes and barrels, while the woman began to shriek:

"Thieves, murder, thieves!"

In a moment people began running toward the store, attracted by the woman's loud cries.

The grocer jumped up from where the prompt blow had knocked him, and rushed at Will.

"I arrest you!" he shouted.

"When you get me," returned Will, and with that he clapped on his hat, leaped over the counter with an easy spring, and darted out of the store.

In a moment the grocer and his wife were after him.

"What's the matter?" cried one of the men who had run to the spot. "Who's murdered?"

"He's robbed me!" yelled the grocer pointing to Will's retreating form. "After the thief!"

That was enough.

It is a peculiar fact that many men are delighted with the opportunity of hunting a fellow-creature.

Will Waters had darted away, the sole idea in his mind being to get away from the grocer, and he did not fairly realize the unpleasant nature of affairs until he beheld a dozen or more people after him in hot haste, and all shouting:

"Stop thief! stop thief!"

He set his teeth firmly together, and his blue eyes flashed with a determined fight.

"I am innocent," he said to himself, "but Morris and his wife would fairly swear away my liberty. I'm not guilty of any crime, and they shall not put me in a cell."

He was a fleet runner and his foes could not catch him. A dog ran out from a doorway and made for the flying lad with teeth well displayed, but with a sure eye an easy aim Will kicked him heavily under the jaw, sent him flying over and over again, and darted on without a moment's pause.

He was a splendid runner, fleet and enduring, and by a little doubling and twisting through the few streets and lanes of the town he soon managed to evade his pursuers and throw them off the track. A quarter of an hour after his hasty departure from the grocery he found himself walking along a sunny road, recovering his breath and thinking over his situation.

He walked on for a half a mile, and then sat down under a tree.

"I wanted a change," he muttered, with a comical expression, "and by Jove, I've got it. What am I to do? If I go home there will be an officer waiting there to arrest me; no doubt about that, so I must give up the idea of getting any more clothing than what I have on me at present. Well, I've a suit of clothing, three dollars and odd cents in my pocket, a fair education, a strong pair of arms and a willing mind; so here goes for New York. I'll not starve while there's work to be found. I must not waste my money on car-riding, so I'll tramp it. I can walk there easily in three hours. So here goes."

And with a stout heart Will Waters started off to walk to the Metropolis.

He picked up a large stick as he walked along, drew forth his pocket-knife, and shaped the stick into a heavy cane. With this mute companion he traveled on, hopeful and light-hearted.

He had just turned a curve in the rather lonesome road, when he met a closed coach, driven at a furious rate for such a bad track. Naturally Will glanced at the vehicle, and was astonished by seeing the door on one side of the carriage suddenly

hurled open and a young lady spring forth, landing safely on her feet at the side of the road.

"Save me, sir, save me," shrieked this young lady, who was about Will's own age and exceedingly pretty. "Oh, save me!"

And with that she rushed into Will's arms and fainted, just as the horses were suddenly checked and the coach came to a standstill.

"Certainly, I'll save you!" responded Will, feeling like a hero in a moment, and he held the young girl very firmly with his left arm while he grasped his stick tightly with his right hand.

Two men suddenly leaped from the carriage, and came quickly toward him. They were both respectably dressed, and one was a kind-looking man with a white necktie.

"Stand back!" cried Will, raising aloft the heavy cane he had made. "This young lady has asked me to save her from you, and I will. You had better not come any nearer if you have any liking for a sound head."

The gentleman with a white necktie smiled kindly upon him.

"My boy," he said, "you are a good young man, and I cannot express my admiration for you. As the father of three daughters I hope that should my girls ever need a protector, they may find such a one as you. This, however, is mistaken nobility on your part, for the young girl you hold in your protecting clasp is insane, as mad as a March hare. I am Doctor Bokanki, and I am taking her to my asylum."

Of course Will Walters was somewhat staggered by this polite harangue. He was prepared to meet violence with violence, but now he hardly knew what to do.

"I don't know whether this is all true or not," he answered doubtfully, "but I guess I'll wait until the young lady recovers and then use my own judgment."

"But I can't wait," said Doctor Bokanki, in an authoritative style.

"You must!" declared Will, growing suddenly suspicious again.

"Not a minute longer," put in the driver, who had jumped down from the coach box, and, as he uttered the words, he suddenly swung his whip around his head, holding on by the lash, and brought the heavy butt with great force against the side of Will's head. The blow knocked him senseless, and together with the girl he fell heavily to the ground.

"Lively, now! Tear her away from that young fool and bundle her into the carriage," ordered Doctor Bokanki. "This cursed delay may injure our chances."

The girl was plucked from Will Walter's limp arm, thrown rudely into the carriage, the two men followed, the driver leaped upon his box and yelled at his horses, and away went the vehicle, leaving the lad lying senseless upon the roadside.

When Will recovered consciousness, which came to pass some five minutes later, he had a slight pain in his head, but beyond that he was all right.

"Gone!" he muttered, looking in vain for the carriage. "And I may have lain there for half an hour, so there's no use running after it. I can't believe that that pretty girl was crazy. I'd much rather believe that Doctor Bokanki was a fraud, and that there was some foul play in the matter. Well, if I can't do anything else, I can and will carry photographs of them all in my mind."

And with that away he went along the road, thinking of his strange adventure, and recalling the pretty face of the girl who had appealed to him to save her.

The morning had been a warm one, and the sun was now nearing the zenith. Feeling very warm, Will removed both coat and vest, and held them over his arms as he walked along.

He reached a village distant about four miles from Yonkers, and was passing through the sunlit streets very peacefully, when suddenly he heard a familiar voice shout:

"There he is! Say, you, Will Waters, I want you. Stop!"

It was the voice of the constable who resided in Yonkers, and Will divined at once that the man was there to effect his arrest.

The constable was fairly upon him when he turned and grasped the lad by the collar of his shirt in a most professional way.

Will kicked backward like a mule, struck the constable on the shins, and then twisted around so as to thump the officer over the head with the stick he still held.

The constable gave a violent wrench at Will's collar, the shirt tore almost in two, and away went the lad once more, leaving the better portion of the garment in the enemy's hand.

Once more running from the grasp of the law!—once more a fugitive dashing along the public street, with that terrible cry again sending the indignant blood through his veins:

"Stop thief! Stop thief!"

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE STORY.

THE town was a small one, and in less than two minutes Will had run out of it and reached the high road, dashing on at a rate which left pursuit far in the rear.

He was rushing on at great speed when he suddenly came to a fork in the road. Another road led into that which he was traveling, and from this road came into view a gentleman of middle age who sat in a light wagon and drove a fleet looking gray horse.

This gentleman, when he saw Will rushing along

the road with his coat and vest over his arm, suddenly pulled up and hailed him:

"I say, in a hurry?"

"In a very great hurry," said Will, as he came to a halt.

"Want to go toward the next town?" the gentleman asked.

"Yes."

"Then jump in and I'll whirl you down there lively."

Will leaped in to the light wagon, the driver shook the reins over the fleet-looking gray horse and away they dashed at racing speed, before the pursuers of the hunted lad came into view or halting distance.

Will breathed freer.

"Going for a doctor?" asked the driver.

"No, sir," said Will.

"What for, then?"

Will took one long glance at the face of the driver.

He was a man of about forty, with a powerful frame, a noble head, and an honest, kind-looking countenance. The lad felt that this was a man who could be trusted, and in answer to the question he simply said.

"For liberty!"

"Eh, what's that?" cried the other, surprised at the words.

"Listen," said Will, and then while the fleet nag bore him rapidly toward the distant city he told his new friend all that had taken place that morning, not even omitting his curious adventure with the young lady who leaped from Doctor Bokanki's carriage.

"There, sir, now you know the cause of my hurry," said Will, the story at an end. "Do I look like the boy to steal from my employer?"

He turned his frank eyes upon the driver, and the latter held out his left hand to him impulsively.

"No, you don't," he said. "I've only known you a quarter of an hour, but I'd trust you in anything."

"Thank you," gratefully said Will. "Now, sir, I appeal to you if you wouldn't have acted the same under the circumstances. You, of course, remember that when you were a boy—"

"Stop!" said the other, with such a strange, longing expression on his face that Will felt an instinctive sympathy for him. "I know nothing of the feelings of a boy."

"Why, you were a boy before you were a man," said Will, positively.

"I suppose so," said the other, "but I know nothing about it."

Will regarded him with astonishment. Was the man insane?

"My lad," said the driver. "I am known by the name of Roger Brant. Let me see; this is 1884. In the year 1874, just ten years ago, a ship was wrecked off the Jersey coast, went to pieces, and there was but one person saved. I was that one."

"I was washed up on the shore almost dead, and badly bruised and cut. They thought I was dead, but an old doctor, Roger Brant by name, took me in hand and managed to bring me to life. Alas, the storm king had left me my life, but had stolen my memory."

"I knew nothing of myself and had to begin life like a child. I was supposed to be a man of twenty-five or thirty years of age, and presumably either English, American, or French. I knew neither my name nor my nationality. However, when they began to teach me the English alphabet, I at once regained my knowledge of that language, and read fluently. It was the same with French."

"There were many vessels wrecked that year and no one could determine from which I had come. Nobody identified me, and my past life was a sealed book to me. I knew not the land of my birth, but that troubled me less than the thought that perhaps I was a married man, and with a wife and children living, was lost to them forever in my strange oblivion."

"I took the name of my preserver, and with his kind assistance made a start in the world. I have prospered in business, but the past is still hidden from me, and to myself I am but ten years old."

Will Waters was intensely interested in Roger Brant's recital.

"I have heard of such things before," he said. "In the cases I have read, the sleeping memories were always brought to life by the person suddenly seeing or hearing something of a startling nature that was connected with their past life."

"That is right" rejoined Brant. "I am told the same thing by good physicians. The chances are, however, that nothing will ever shock my slumbering memory, and I shall die without knowing my name or anything about my previous condition in life. Never mind me. Let us talk of yourself. You are going to New York?"

"I am sir."

"Do you expect to work at any particular branch of business?"

"I expect to do anything that I can get to do," answered Will.

"Very well I'll hire you," said Brant. "I am in the Express business. You can drive, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you look plenty strong enough for the work," asserted Brant. "Consider yourself engaged. We'll fix the wages after you've been at it a week."

"I'm satisfied, sir," cried Will, decidedly pleased. "You'll find me willing."

"I don't doubt it. I've taken a strong liking to you, and think we shall be fast friends. Here we are in town, where I stopped last night. My valise is up in the hotel, and if you will accept of it I can

offer you a good sound shirt to put on in place of that torn one. It will certainly make you look better."

"I shall be very glad to accept your offer," returned Will, looking at his shirt, which hung in shreds from him.

"Then come on," requested Brant, as he drew rein in the stable yard attached to the hotel. "We'll stay here and get the horse a bite and get one ourselves, and then we'll drive to the city. We shall get there by three or four o'clock."

They walked into the hotel, and went to the room occupied by Brant, where the latter opened a valise and drew forth a clean shirt which he handed over to Will.

The boy stripped off the badly-torn linen garment, and his bare back gleamed clean and white in the sunlight. He turned to address Brant, and uttered a cry of wonder.

Brant was standing statue-like in the middle of the room, looking intently at Will's shoulder. His hands were eagerly outstretched, the fingers curved as though to clutch at something. His eyes were fixed and seemed to gaze inwardly. His frame trembled with violent agitation. Great beads of sweat stood upon his brow, and every force of nerve, brain and body seemed brought to bear in one immense effort.

Suddenly as though overcome by the strain, he reeled, fell backward, and dropped heavily to the floor—insensible. Will dashed cold water in his face, chafed his hands, and soon revived him.

"Why, Mr. Brant," he asked, "what was the matter with you?"

Brant sighed heavily, and passed his hands sadly over his beating temples.

"I can't tell you, my boy," he replied. "I only know that something about you, or something that you said or did struck upon the slumbering memories of the past half-awoke them for a brief instant, only to plunge me into deeper darkness than before. I tried to clutch the fleeting shadows, but they evaded my grasp, and I fainted from the excessive strain."

"Strange!" muttered Will, but he, of course, could bring no light upon the mystery.

The ride to New York was a very quiet one, for Brant and Will had both plenty to think about. The boy's thoughts were of the unknown future; silently they rode on.

They crossed Harlem Bridge, entered the city, and were driving down Third avenue, when two men, dressed in blue flannel suits, rushed into the middle of the street, stopped the horse, threw back their coats and displayed police badges.

"That's the young man," asserted one. "No doubt about it."

"I want you," said the other, coming to the side of the wagon and clutching Will by the arm, while he lightly slipped one ring of a pair of handcuffs over the lad's wrist.

"Give in, give in, my lad," advised Brant. "I'll go bail for you."

"You'll not go bail for this case," cried the officer, as he slipped on the other ring of the handcuff and helped Will from the wagon.

"Why, the bail can't be heavy where the charge is petty larceny!"

"Petty larceny!" echoed the officer. "I am not arresting him for that."

"Not for the Yonkers affair?" muttered Will Waters. "For what, then, am I arrested?"

"For murder!"

CHAPTER III.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

It was just half-past three o'clock in the afternoon when Frank Mayne, bookkeeper in the house of Simmons & Co., commission agents in New York, closed the heavy ledger before him on the desk and cast a lance around the office.

"All gone," he murmured, "and left me to lock up, as usual. Confound it, why will men be so stupid as to tempt a fellow?"

And then this young man, who looked to be about eighteen years of age, stood irresolutely before the large safe in which he was placing the ledger.

He took a small key from his pocket, and then, with a trembling hand inserted the key in the lock of an inner compartment of the safe. The key was turned, and a drawer brought to view in which lay several packages of money. From one of these packages Frank extracted bills to the amount of fifty dollars.

"I must have another trial with those fellows," he muttered, as he closed and locked the safe. "They can't always win from me that's certain. If I lose—well, then, the old man must put up the money to save me from exposure. But I feel like winning."

Ah! that's it. They always expect to win and replace the money these clerks and bookkeepers who steal from their confiding employers, and who always end in prison or exile."

Frank Mayne, with the stolen money in his pocket, carefully locked up the office and walked to Broadway. Along Broadway he hurried until he reached a handsome saloon not far from the City Hall.

In this saloon he met a rather flashily-attired young man.

"Hello, Frank; after satisfaction, eh?"

"Yes, Wentworth. I'm going to get even with you fellows," responded Frank, with the air of an old sport.

And Wentworth, who was a sharper, a blackleg gambler, and a villain all through his anatomy, slapped him on the back and cried:

"Plucky boy! I tell you that you've got nerve, you have. Come, the boys are waiting for the fourth man to make up a little game of poker."

And then he led his victim to a small room in the back of the saloon, where they met two other young men one a sharp like Wentworth, the other a flat like Mayne.

They called for a bottle of wine, these sharps and flats, and then began to gamble.

The game lasted half an hour, and at the end of that time Frank had lost all his money.

"That breaks me," he said, turning very white and moving back from the table.

"And I'm broke, too," said Wentworth, who had played all his money into the hands of the other sharper. "Darn the luck! Come, Frank, we'll have a drink and then take a walk."

Very dejectedly the victim followed the sharper. They had a drink, and then strolled out from the saloon into the afternoon sunlight, Frank looking pale and nervous.

"Dead broke, Frank?" asked Wentworth.

"Yes."

"Then why don't you get more?"

"Where?"

"Where you have been getting it from all along!"

And the rascal looked straight into the boy's eyes.

"What do you mean?" cried Frank; but his voice trembled, and he did not meet the other's eye.

"This is what I mean," quietly answered Wentworth. "I mean that no young bookkeeper can play poker as high as you have been playing it, with only his salary for funds. I may as well tell you what I think, ay, in fact, what I know."

"You have been stealing from your boss!"

Frank was silent. This man was not to be deceived.

"Come, my boy" said Wentworth, "there need be no secrets between us. How much money have you taken?"

"Oh, a pile!" desperately answered Frank.

"How much?"

"I don't know exactly how much."

"Some hundreds?"

"Yes."

"How do you expect to make the cash balance?"

"I thought of asking my father. He's rich, you know. But I hardly think he'll let me have it."

"You needn't think at all about it," rejoined Wentworth. "You may be sure of it. Besides, in order to ask the old man you would have to confess all that you have done, and there's no telling what he might do with you. Now there's an easy way for you to get out of the scrape."

"How?" eagerly demanded Frank.

"You only took a little from the pile?"

"Yes."

"And there's plenty more left?"

"Yes, several thousands of dollars," admitted the young bookkeeper.

"Then take the rest of it," advised the tempter in a whisper.

"What! commit a big robbery?" cried the other.

"Hush, you fool. Don't talk so loud. I'd like to know what you've been doing for some time! Haven't you been stealing in small sums? If your employers find it out, as they are sure to do, will you escape imprisonment? What's the odds whether you steal fifty dollars like you did yesterday, or ten thousand? Eh? Besides, I can do the job with you, and can work it so that it will look like the work of regular burglars, and you will never be suspected."

You've got the keys in your possession, we can take the money, fill the lock with powder and attach a fuse to the charge, and be a quarter of a mile away when the explosion takes place. How can you ever be suspected in the matter? Thus you will do away with all fears in regard to the money you have been stealing, and we'll make enough out of the job to go on the gayest racket for months to come. What do you say to it?"

"There really is no danger?" hesitated Frank.

"Not a bit," the tempter whispered.

"And they'll never discover anything of deficiency in the cash?"

"Of course not; and you will be saved the necessity of going down on your knees to your old man," said Wentworth. "And just think what a figure you could cut with the money. Why, you might win a fortune with such a stake. You could play a mighty big game."

And Frank Mayne, who was a gambler in his heart, falteringly murmured:

"I guess I'll do it."

"Oh, make up your mind," urged the other, seeing that his victim was disposed to yield.

"Well, you are sure you can fix it so that the safe will be blown open?" asked the bookkeeper.

"Of course I am," replied Wentworth, "and I can leave some burglars' tools on the floor besides."

"Then I'll do it!" resolved Frank Mayne. "But I'll tackle the junior partner's safe, instead of the one at the office. I know he's got a pile of money in it!"

It was a little after midnight when Frank Mayne and the villainous Sam Wentworth entered the library of the junior partner's residence, the latter carrying a bull's-eye lantern.

"Hush-h!" said Wentworth, "you walk very heavily. Where's the safe? Ah! I see it now."

He flashed the guarded rays of his lantern upon the safe.

"Lively, now," he ordered. "Don't be all night about getting the money out."

Frank paused in irresolution before the door of the safe, the key in his hand fairly shaking.

"I must do it," he muttered, desperately, and unlocked the inner doors, exposing to the greedy view of his accomplice the neat packages of money.

"Here, give them to me. I've got pockets big

enough to hold all," advised Wentworth, and Frank handed over the packages one by one.

"Is there anything more of value?" asked Sam.

"No, nothing worth taking. There may be some checks inside, but they'd be of no use to us, because—"

He paused abruptly, and turned on his heel as a small door at the side of the room opened with a creaking noise, and a man of middle age, holding a lamp in his hand, entered.

His eyes fell upon the blanched face of the young bookkeeper.

"Gaines! the junior partner!" gasped Frank.

"Aha!" cried the partner, raising his bright lamp aloft and flashing its light over the office.

"Frank Mayne at the safe!"

There was an instant of silence, of astonishment on the part of the partner, of awful fear on the part of the young bookkeeper.

Then the tempter at his side, Wentworth, slipped the hilt of a keen dagger into the hands of his dupe, and whispered:

"He has seen your face, and has recognized you. It is your liberty or his life."

CHAPTER IV.

"YOU'VE FOUND A WARM PLACE IN MY HEART."

HAD he been arrested for conspiring against the English nation, Will Waters could not have been more astonished than he was when seized on the charge of murder.

He looked blankly at the officer who had volunteered the astonishing information.

"Say it again," he muttered.

"Say what?"

"Tell me the name of the person you accuse me of murdering."

"Morton Gaines."

"Where did he live?"

"Here, in New York."

"And I have not been in the city for over a year," asserted Will.

"Here, let me put in my oar," put in Roger Brant, who had been a very attentive listener.

"When was this man murdered?"

"Two nights since."

"I can swear that he came down from Yonkers with me."

"To-day?"

"Yes."

"Which is nothing in his favor, for he had time to get up there before he came down. However, we are not going to stand here talking. If you have got anything to say come with us."

Several people had collected on the spot.

The blood rushed into the young man's cheek as the thought came into his mind that those loungers were looking upon him in horror as a murderer.

Roger Brant was filled with grave doubts as he walked by the side of the youthful prisoner. The remarkable circumstances under which he had formed the acquaintance of Will Waters made this awful charge probable.

"My boy," he requested, as they tramped along the streets. "I want you to tell the truth. If you are guilty, then I can do nothing for you, but if you are innocent, look me in the eye and say so."

Will turned his head, and looked honestly into Brant's eyes.

"I am innocent of this charge," said he. "I never knew the man whose name they mention, and I give you my solemn word, before God, that I have not been in the city within a year."

"I believe you," rejoined Brant. "I will stick to you."

Will gave him a grateful glance.

Shortly after, they arrived at one of the police stations.

A handsome-looking captain of middle age stood behind the desk, and when the officers walked in with their prisoner he looked up.

His eyes fell on the prisoner, and he started forward with a strange, intense stare, leaning over the desk to look at Will.

"Who is that?" he cried, and continued to stare at Will.

The lad, in wonder, returned his glance in a natural manner.

One of the officers answered, in a business-like way:

"This is young Gale, the lad who murdered Morton Gaines, the Wall-street-broker."

"What! Gale?" cried Will. "Why, my name is Waters."

"Or Hardscrabble, or Jones, Smith, Brown, or Robinson," suggested the officer who had spoken.

"We know all those dodges, my son."

The captain behind the desk kept his eyes on Will.

"That face—that face," he slowly repeated.

"How familiar it is to me, and yet I cannot remember where I have seen it. What is the charge, officer?"

"The murder, on the night of the 8th, of Morton Gaines."

"Prisoner's name?"

good amount of lager aboard. Then the latter discovered the housekeeper and released her.

"The servant, who had been to a beer-garden, went with the old housekeeper into the library, the door being open. Upon the floor lay the form of their master, nearly dead, and bleeding from a deep knife-wound near the heart.

"The safe where the broker was in the habit of keeping considerable money was open, the money missing.

"Gaines was nearly dead. The two women, so alarmed that they did not know exactly what to do, ran to the door, shouted for help, and were fortunate enough to have a policeman at hand. He entered the library with them. A lamp lay on the floor by the side of the broker, smashed.

"The broker opened his eyes as the policeman bent down by his side.

"I am dying," he said.

"Who has done this?" demanded the policeman.

"My clerk, Charley Gale, stabbed me when I discovered him rifling my safe. You will find his picture in the top drawer. Hunt him down and hang him."

"The witnesses who heard this were the police-mau, the housekeeper and the servant-girl. The housekeeper ran to the desk, got the portrait, and gave it to her master.

"He looked at it.

"That is the likeness of the young man who stabbed me," he asserted, and then fell back and died.

"The superintendent had copies of the picture struck off. The young man had skipped. I obtained one of the pictures, and was just coming from my boarding-house half an hour ago with my partner, when he said:

"Look! there's your man for the Gaines murder."

"I looked up, saw this young man coming along, pulled out the likeness, compared the faces, saw that I was right and made the arrest.

"You can see that I have made no mistake, captain."

And he handed a photograph up to the police captain.

The latter looked at it intently, and then scanned the feature's of young Waters.

"Yes, Gripp," he assented. "You have the right man, without doubt."

"Will you please let me look at that photograph?" respectfully asked Will.

It was held up to him. He took a single glance at it, and uttered a cry of surprise.

"My God!" he cried. "It's exactly like me."

"Of course it is," growled Detective Gripp.

"But I never had a photograph taken in my life."

"Oh, of course not. Anybody can see that it ain't you," smiled Gripp. "Well, captain, what are the orders?"

"Oh, you're quite right. Take him around to the police court, make your charge, and he will then be committed for trial. What is your name, sir?"

The question was addressed to Will's new friend.

"Roger Brant, of New York," was the reply.

"I don't know you," briefly returned the latter.

"Your face is familiar to me, but your name is not."

Roger Brant was at once interested.

"Hold on," he snapped, in quite an excited manner. "I would like you to tell me whom you took me for. I am a man with a lost, broken memory, and I am anxious to get at my past life. I took the name, Roger Brant, from another man, but really it is not my name."

"Well, your face, although ordinarily familiar, is not associated in my mind with any name," answered the police captain.

Brant sighed; another slender hope was crushed.

"And will you please tell me your name?" he asked.

"Moore," was the reply, "Captain James Moore."

"Moore," repeated Brant, in a very thoughtful manner. "The name is an ordinary one and does not strike any chords of my slumbering, lost memory."

Without more ado, the officers conducted Will to the near st police court, Brant going with them.

The ward detective made his charge, told his story, and then exhibited the photograph.

"Now, prisoner, what have you to say to the charge?" asked the justice. "Of course you are not guilty, and it's a mistake. But my own impression is that you're good for a life-sentence at least. Come, speak out. What is your name?"

"Will Waters."

"Age?"

"Eighteen."

"Occupation?"

"Farmer."

"That's pretty good," grinned the much-biased justice, and the detective smiled. "Well, this photograph is enough evidence for me, and I shall not require Mr. Gripp to produce any witnesses. I commit you for trial."

And Gripp was about to hand him over to special officers to take away, when Brant put in his oar.

"Let me speak to him first," he said to Gripp, and the latter granted his request.

"I believe you to be innocent," stated Brant. "I am ready to act as a true friend to you in this matter."

"I can only say I thank you."

"But what shall I do?"

"Call down my mother and father from the country, and they of course can identify me. When I prove that I am Will Waters, I certainly disprove the assertion that I am Charley Gale, and so they can not but perceive their own error in the murder charge."

"That is sensible enough," admitted Brant. "What mystery can there be at the bottom of this, however, that causes you to be arrested for an exact counterpart?"

"That's what puzzles me," responded Will. "But first let me get out of limbo. Then we can investigate the mystery."

"Right," answered Brant. "Have you got money for your present needs?"

"Yes, plenty."

"Draw on me whenever you want any more. Give me your parents' address, and I will soon have them down here to liberate you."

He took down the address, and then shook Will's manacled hands with his own.

"Cheer up," said he. "You've found a warm place in my heart and I'll never desert you. I don't know why it is, but I'll spend my last dollar, spill my last drop of blood for you."

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

In one of the most fashionable parts of Brooklyn lived Harvey Gale.

He was looked upon there as simply a retired gentleman of means, living in good style, and attending to his own affairs.

In one of the parlors of this house stood the master, Harvey Gale, a man of about forty. There was a dark, gloomy expression on his face.

"Where can the boy be?" he muttered to himself, striding up and down the room. "Has he run away with his employer's money? Curse it, I wanted to see that boy grow up a credit. I've tried hard to keep him straight, but—"

"I was crooked by nature," interrupted a voice at the door, and in came Charley Gale.

Father and son stared hard at one another for a moment.

Charley was poorly dressed, his neat, tasteful raiment was gone, and he had a ragged, ill-assorted attire that, in conjunction with a dirty face and uncombed hair, was a partial disguise.

He looked haggard and worn, and there was an expression on his face that Harvey Gale had never seen there before.

It was the same look that can be seen in the eyes of a hunted stag, when he hears the baying of the hounds on his track.

"Charley!" cried the parent.

"Yes, pop, it's Charley," returned the weary-looking lad.

"Where have you been for the last two days?"

"Hiding."

"From whom?"

"The police."

"Then you have been stealing from your employer," asserted the father. "You need not fear him, for he cannot prosecute you."

"You've got the wrong hang of the matter," groaned Charley. "You think that I plundered his safe, and did not know of his death, because I was in hiding, but that's where you make a mistake. I knew of his death before you did."

The father recoiled.

"What?"

"It's true," whispered Charley. "I murdered him!"

"My God! what in the name of all that's strange caused you to kill him?"

"I was robbing him, together with one who has led me into gambling and dissipation. The old broker came upon us, my mask was off, and he uttered my name in surprise; my comrade whispered that I was recognized and doomed; he thrust a knife into my hand, and, acting under the impulse of the moment, I leaped upon the old man and stabbed him. An instant later I regretted the rash act."

"Go on," the father requested.

There was an odd expression on his face as he regarded his son. The look was not one of horror, but rather regret, as though a cherished hope had been blighted.

"Go on!" echoed the son. "What more can I say? I escaped from the house with my friend, or rather, my enemy. I went with him to his lodgings. In the morning I learned that I had not killed the old man instantly, and that he had told a policeman the name of his murderer before he died.

"I do not know what to do—where to go. My companion in crime robbed me of all my money and clothing when I was asleep, and escaped, leaving me without a dollar."

"Hungry, dirty, and in fear, I left the house at length and came here. You must hide me, father, or they'll catch me and hang me as sure as fate."

"I must do something," muttered the father. "Why didn't you come to me if you wanted money?"

"You went back on me for a paltry hundred."

"What did you gamble at?"

"Everything."

"And lost?"

"Certainly, with sharpers," replied Charley Gale; "but don't gab at me now, after the mischief is done. What are you going to do for me? You are the one who always pretended to idolize me."

It was true. The one being in the wide world that Harvey Gale cared for was his handsome son, and him he fairly idolized.

He turned away from the young man and paced up and down the room.

Charley, his eyes fixed sullenly on the floor, said not a word.

While the father was pacing up and down the room there came a loud ring at the bell.

Charley leaped to his feet as though he had been shot.

"Hide me quick!" he cried. "It may be the officers. Oh, where shall I hide?"

He looked vainly up and down the parlor, and failing to see a good hiding-place, ran fleetly out of the room.

A moment later the door opened, and in came a servant.

"Mr. Waters," he announced.

"Who?" cried Gale.

"Mr. Waters."

"Look like a farmer?" questioned the master.

"Yes, sir."

"Show him in."

And then Will's coarse-grained father was shown into the parlor.

"So it is you, eh?" said Gale.

"Yes, I'm here again."

"Sit down. What brings you here now? Didn't you get the money all right?"

"Oh, yes, but there's no need for the cash."

"Why?"

"The boy's gone."

"Gone?" cried Gale, and leaped to his feet. He turned pale, shivered for two minutes, then perpired freely, wiped his face with his handkerchief, and sat down again.

"When did he go?"

"Yesterday."

"The rascal!"

"Ah! He's a shrewd one. Gale."

"Well?"

"I think he suspects."

"Nonsense. You're getting scared about nothing."

"Maybe I am. Well, he's gone. What are we going to do?"

"I hardly know what to do. We must contrive some means to get him back, or—"

At that instant the loud bell at the front door rung again.

"Wait till we see who this visitor is," Gale requested.

A moment after a tall, genteel-looking man was ushered into the room.

"Gale," asked he, "is your boy's name Charley?"

"Yes."

"Then he's in trouble."

"How do you know that?" demanded Gale.

"Because I saw him in the hands of the police half an hour ago."

"What?" cried the truly astonished Gale.

"It's true. He has been arrested on the charge of murdering Morton Gaines, the broker, and has been committed to trial. He persisted in denying his identity."

"What can this mean?" muttered Gale, and then, as though some startling idea had flashed through his mind, he turned eagerly to his visitor.

"He denied his identity?"

"Yes."

"What name did he give?"

"I believe he said his name was Waters—Will Waters," replied Gale's friend. "He claimed to be a young farmer, and said that he had just arrived in the city. He gave a friend the address of his parents, as he claimed, and sent for them to prove that it was only a case of mistaken identity. But it's your boy, I know it is, for I saw him myself, and can swear to it."

A triumphant flash lit up the face of Harvey Gale, and taking the astonished Waters by the arm, he led him aside.

"Listen," he whispered. "My boy did commit the murder, but your boy has been arrested for it. You know your course. The law shall be satisfied, and my boy shall be saved!"

CHAPTER VI.

REPUBBED.

UNLUCKY Will Waters, innocent as a child, was rudely dragged away to a dungeon cell, and looked upon as a murderer.

Roger Brant turned away in a determined mood, with the idea of losing no time in hunting up Will's parents.

At the exit from the court-room he came face to face with Police Captain Moore.

"That young man is committed for trial, I suppose?" said Moore.

"Then I guess I'll wait for him," said Brant. "It's no good my hunting around New York for a farmer. I'll wait for him."

"You'll not have to wait long. Here he comes up the road."

Sure enough, old Waters was coming toward the house.

Brant walked out to meet him, and they came together at the gate.

"Mr. Waters?"

"Yes, sir; that's my name."

"My name is Brant. You've been to New York hunting for your son?"

"I have."

"You didn't find him?"

"No; nor didn't hear a thing about him," snarled Waters. "I reckon he didn't go to the city."

"Yes, he did, and he's there now," responded Brant.

"How do you know?"

"Because I saw him. He is in prison on a charge of murder."

"What?" shrieked old Waters, and anybody would have thought that he was greatly surprised.

Taereupon Brant related to him the story of the arrest, Waters listening very attentively.

"Oh, it will be easy enough to get him out of that," said Waters, at the conclusion of the story. "He will be released as soon as I identify him. You get to New York as soon as possible, and get him out before a justice on what the lawyers call a writ of habeas corpus, and the old woman shall slip on her best duds and come with me on the next train. Any lawyer can do the job for you."

"Certainly," agreed Brant. "I can get him out. Do you know where the police-court is?"

"Yes."

"Come there with your wife, and you'll have the pleasure of taking your son away from the cursed land-sharks."

"We'll be there," said Waters, and away went Roger Brant to catch the next train.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the young farmer was brought into the court-room between stalwart officers.

Brant had secured the services of a lawyer to do the little legal business that was necessary, and then had notified Police Captain Moore of what was to transpire.

"I'll be on hand to congratulate the young man," stated Moore. "I feel as though I could do almost anything to serve him."

And at the afternoon session he was there, conspicuous among the spectators in his handsome uniform.

Will sat down with his custodians, and Brant walked to the door to await the arrival of the farmer and his wife.

In due time old Waters and his wife came in, just as Will's case was called up.

The lawyer engaged for the young man looked around, saw the couple with Brant, and at once called for John Waters.

Will stood at the bar, the officers behind him.

The old farmer was sworn, and then the lawyer stood up.

"Your Honor," he began, "a very great but unintentional injustice has been done my client, the prisoner at the bar, who has been arrested for murder, of which he is just as innocent as the babe unborn. This is a case of mistaken identity, as I shall prove by two eminently respectable witnesses. I shall prove that he is not the party named in the indictment. Mr. Waters—"

The farmer looked him full in the eye. He had not taken any notice of Will.

"Mr. Waters," asked the lawyer, "have you children?"

"I have one, sir."

"Son or daughter?"

"A son."

"What is his name?"

"Will Waters."

"Mr. Waters," and here the lawyer pointed straight at Will, "is that your son?"

The old man looked full at the prisoner.

"No, sir," he answered, in a most natural manner, "that is not my son."

Captain Moore looked at Brant in a mystified manner as the latter leaped to his feet.

The lawyer stared hard, first at the old farmer, and then at his client.

Will, thunderstruck, gazed at the old farmer in amazement.

"What?" he cried. "Do you deny that I am your son?"

"Of course I do," replied Waters. "Why, I never saw your face in all my life."

Will felt as if the floor of the court-room was reeling under his feet.

What to say or what to do in the face of this astounding denial he did not know.

For a moment he could scarcely believe his ears.

The man and the woman he had called father and mother all his life stood facing him, with no sign of recognition in their eyes.

He held forth his manacled hands toward the old woman in a manner that was eloquently appealing.

"And you—you, mother, don't know my face? Don't you know that I am your son? Speak, for God's sake, and relieve this most horrible suspense!"

The old woman stood up, placed her spectacles securely upon the bridge of her nose, and peered sharply at Will.

There was silence of the utmost intensity of character as the old woman looked full into the face of the agonized prisoner.

"I'd know my son among ten thousand," she

slowly said. "I can swear by the Almighty God that you are not my child!"

Moore shook his head in a very sorrowful manner, Roger Brant looked very regretful and hung his head.

As for Will, he lifted his manacled hands toward heaven, and in solemn tones said:

"Poor, pitiful wretches, may God forgive you for this crime. What the dark plot is that underlies this perjury I know not, but I feel that time will make it known. You two have well-nigh sworn away my life, but in heaven there is one who will liberate me and make your baseness known to the world."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOY FERRET'S FRIEND AT WORK.

Of course there was but one mode of procedure to be followed out by the court.

The *habeas corpus* had resulted only in more firmly fixing upon the prisoner the charge of murder.

Will, by order of the court, was taken away to his cell.

Brant and Moore walked out of the court-room in silence.

They met on the sidewalk and faced one another.

"What do you think about this?" asked Captain Moore,

"I don't hardly know what one can think," replied Brant. "It seems strange that these old people, who are claimed by the young man as his parents, should refuse to recognize him, unless they speak falsely, and yet I can't believe anything bad about that boy."

"That is the way I think and feel about the matter," Moore responded. "I feel an intense interest, however, in that young man, and from all my experience I am warranted in making the remark that he has not got a criminal expression on his face. I think that there is some mystery at the bottom of all this. Suppose we visit the lad in his cell?"

"I'm willing," assented Brant. "We'll hear what he's got to say."

Together they went to Will's cell, the police captain remarking:

"It's curious that I should take such an interest in a stranger."

"No more curious with you than with me," said Brant. "The young man must have something of a remarkable nature in his personal appearance to interest us both."

In a short time they were admitted to Will's cell. The young man was pacing up and down the narrow apartment, evidently thinking very deeply.

"Come, my boy," spoke up Brant, "what have you got to say to us? We are both friendly disposed toward you, but our faith has been badly shaken."

Will turned his bright eyes on the speaker.

"Did you observe that woman when she called on God to witness that I was not her child?"

"I did."

"Did you notice anything particular in her appearance?"

"She seemed earnest."

"More than that—more than that," the young man excitedly rejoined. "I was regarding her intently, and can swear that the expression on her face was truthful. At this moment I think that she told the truth."

The two men regarded him with evident astonishment.

What did he mean by making such an assertion?

"What do you mean?" demanded the police captain.

"I mean that I think that I am not their child, that they are not my parents. I think that they were paid for keeping me, for I know that old Waters received a sum of money through the mails every three months, and from whom I could never learn. Moreover, they never treated me as other parents treat their children, and on my own part I am sure that I never felt a particle of affection for either of them. I tell you I'm not their son, and this is their time to cast me off."

"Then, if you're not their son, you must be somebody else's," remarked Brant.

"That's certain."

"Very certain," chimed in Moore. "But whose son is he? If there is any truth in this theory, I may be able to ferret out some facts. Now, young man, attend to me. You positively do not look as though you belonged to that old couple, and I'm inclined to think that there has been some underhand work done, and I can, perhaps, ferret it out. You say that the old farmer received sums of money through the mails every quarter, did you not?"

"I did."

"In what form did the money come to him?"

"In a registered letter."

"Do you know from what place?"

"No."

"Then I will make it my business to find out. It can be done easily enough through the post-office department. By finding out the name and address of the man who sent the money I may easily clear up the reason for the payments, or may, otherwise, stumble on a clew. Have you anything further to say?"

"Well, I was about to suggest that there are plenty of people in the neighborhood of my home in the country who could identify me as Will Waters."

"It would not amount to anything in the face of the sworn testimony of the two people you have declared to be your father and mother. No, let the matter rest with me. If I get a clew I'll soon get the right of the case. One thing is certain, I can swear to, and that is, that I know your family face."

"You?"

"Yes, and what is more, I have an idea that when

I find out who you are I'll clear up this whole matter in short order. Cheer up, be of good heart, and trust to us to do the best for you."

Will grasped their hands, and an eloquently grateful look crept into his eyes.

"I can only say I thank you," said he, "but I want to assure you again that I am innocent, and beg you to save my life."

"We'll do it," Brant confidently asserted.

"Trust to us," Moore added.

And then they took their leave, with renewed confidence in the young man who had so strangely enlisted their sympathy, and won their warm, unsolicited friendship.

Farmer Waters and his wife left the court-room, and walked down the street together, took a car to Fulton Ferry, and went over to Brooklyn. They went straight to the house occupied by Harvey Gale.

The latter must have been watching them, for he admitted them in person.

"Well?" he asked, as soon as they were in the parlor.

"It's all right," Waters replied.

"He's committed for trial?"

"Yes."

"What did the general opinion in court seem to be?"

"They seemed to think that he was a fraud."

"He is doomed," said Gale. "If he called a hundred people to identify him, you and the old woman could still swear he was not your son, and judge and jury would believe you two, and doubt the rest. He is doomed."

"Do you want anything further of us?"

"No, you can go back to your home, and keep your mouth shut," replied Gale. "Oh, by the way, has he got any friends?"

"Yes; two, I think.

"This Roger Brant, who came up for me, is one. And the other is a police captain, a man of about your age."

"What is his name?"

"I'm not sure," answered Waters, "but I think I heard one of the officers in court call him Moore—Captain Moore."

"Moore," fairly shrieked Harvey Gale, his face blanching to a deathly whiteness. "Did you say Captain Moore!"

"I did," Waters responded.

Gale's form shook, and with an excited stride he paced up and down the room, trying to calm his agitation.

"He there," he muttered, and raised a shaking hand to his forehead. "Did he appear to take an interest in the boy?"

"A great interest; fully as much as Roger Brant."

"Away with you to your home, and for God's sake be wary and cautious in all you say," ordered Gale, an anxious look gathering on his face as they left the room. "It's strange that they should meet, and under such peculiar circumstances. Ah, I scent danger—deep peril in this meeting. And he takes an interest in him at sight now, for he's a tiger, a very tiger on the scent, and if he once gets a clew he will solve the mystery. Now I must risk anything, take any step to foil that police tiger."

CHAPTER VIII.

PRETTY GRACE WILLIAMS.

In a large back-room of the top floor of a house in New York stood a young girl, absently gazing out through the window-panes into the yard below. It was the same pretty young girl who had been defended by the young farmer; the handsome creature who had leaped from a close carriage on the high road, and in piteous tones asked Will Waters to save her.

In order that the course of the story may proceed clearly and without confusion, it becomes necessary to narrate how the young girl became a prisoner.

Widow Williams lived in very comfortable circumstances in New York during the winter season, and in the summer time she always moved to her country-seat on the Hudson River.

She had but one child, a daughter, who was growing into womanhood, and who was the very idol of the fond mother.

One day during the summer season the mother took a walk over to a neighbor's house, leaving Grace, the daughter, practicing her music lesson.

In addition to the young girl, at that time there was only one person in the house, and that was the cook. Grace sat alone in the parlor.

She had been playing at the piano for about a quarter of an hour, when suddenly there came a very light rap at the open door.

She looked up and saw a neatly-dressed young man standing there with his hat in his hand.

He looked rather bashful and awkward, and half-afraid to even look at the young girl.

"Well, sir?" inquiringly said Grace.

"Be you Miss Williams?" asked the bashful young man, in the style of the country folks.

"I am."

"I reckon that it's your marn that's over to the next house," he said, stammering.

"Yes, my mother is there," admitted the girl, getting interested.

"Well, I

road toward the house occupied by the next neighbor.

A hundred yards from the gate of the widow's estate there was a cross-road.

"What ails my mother?" asked the young girl.

"Well, I reckon she took sick at her stummuck," answered the countrified young man.

And just at that moment they got to the cross-roads.

A carriage was standing at the side of the road, the driver on the box, idly switching at some wild flowers with his whip, and did not even look up as the young couple approached.

Straight past the carriage the young man walked.

"Reckon some party is making a picnic-ground out o' that big wood patch."

"Yes," abstractedly replied Grace, who was thinking of her mother.

She had just time to utter the word when the young man lifted his hand the countrified style dropping from him like a mask.

As soon as he lifted his hand two men rushed upon the girl from behind.

They each bore a garment that looked like a large cloak, and as they reached the girl they both threw the broad mantles over her head. Then the young man, who was no longer bashful, picked her up in his arms and ran back to the carriage with her.

The poor girl struggled, but her struggles were in vain. Sick and faint with horror, she swooned.

When she recovered she found herself bowling along in a carriage, facing two men, one of whom was a very bashful man, who winked expressively and said:

"Take it easy, my girl, and you'll be handled easy. If you make a fuss it'll be the worse for you. Take things easy, and you'll be treated like a lady."

The horrified girl could only stare at the speaker. She was dazed and bewildered, and for a moment incapable of doing or saying anything.

Suddenly she caught at the handle of the door, flung it open and with a wild leap sprung fairly into the highway.

There she met with Will Waters and then occurred the scene narrated in the first chapter of this story, where the young farmer became her courageous but unfortunate champion.

That very night the girl was removed to New York and placed in the house where we find her at the opening of the chapter.

Here she was visited by the young man who had so cleverly effected her capture. He brought her food, a chair to sit on, a straw mattress to lie on, and two or three books to read.

He also brought with him pen and ink. Placing these articles and a sheet of paper before the girl, he ordered her to write as he dictated.

Knowing that it was useless to refuse, she seized the pen and wrote the following lines:

"MY DEAR MOTHER:—

"I am well and sound, but in the hands of men who know that you are wealthy.

"They intend to treat me well for about one week, being willing to wait that length of time for you to comply with their demands, but at the same time should you not come to terms with them, they will alter their course.

"They demand the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars from you for my release, and they say that they will not release me for a cent less.

"Within one week you must insert a personal notice addressed to 'Grace' in one of the New York daily papers, stating your compliance with their demands, otherwise they will cut off my left ear on the next day, my right on the next day, my nose on the tenth day, and send them to you daily, and if that does not obtain the money, they will cut off my head and send it to you by Express.

"Hoping that you will speedily release me from this situation, I remain,

"Your daughter,
"GRACE."

"That will do," smiled the young man.

He then placed an envelope before her, and commanded her to write her mother's address.

Then, with the letter in his pocket, he left the room.

As he passed out of the door his coat caught, and something fell with a clatter to the ground.

Like a panther the girl bounded forward, and picked it up from the floor.

It was a pistol.

With a readiness of invention that was worthy of an older head she thrust the weapon into her pocket, and seizing the chair by the back placed it on the floor with a motion that was equally silent and swift.

Hardly had the door closed when it was opened again, and the young man thrust his head into the room.

He saw the chair lying on the floor, naturally conjectured that it had made the noise, and without saying a word withdrew.

The girl took the weapon from her pocket and examined it.

It was a seven-shooter, made on an improved pattern, and it was fully loaded, too.

"I'll keep it," muttered the prisoner, placing it in her pocket. "If a chance to obtain my liberty presents itself, girl as I am, I'll not hesitate to use this weapon. I'm glad I know how to use it, and I'm beginning to grow brave."

She was getting over her terror.

She was standing by the window of her room, thinking of her mother and also of the noble young man who had attempted to rescue her, when the key was turned in the lock, the door opened, and

an old woman entered the room. Grace glanced at her. The woman was probably over sixty, and much bent with age. She wore a shabby dress, coarse and dirty, and over her head was an old shawl that descended about her shoulders.

She had long, skinny hands that looked like claws and seemed to indicate a cruel nature.

She closed the door and looked at Grace.

The girl returned her gaze.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I'm Mother Mix," answered the old woman, in a hoarse whisper.

"And what are you?"

"The housekeeper of this royal ranch, my dear," hoarsely answered the old creature. "I've come to keep you company."

A sudden idea came into the young girl's head.

She suddenly drew the pistol from her pocket, and covered the old woman with the gleaming weapon.

"Oh!" gasped Mother Mix, and she shivered and trembled.

"Mother Mix," ordered the girl, "walk over to the other side of the room."

Wonderingly the old woman obeyed the command.

"Now," said Grace, "you've got to obey my commands, or I shall have to put a bullet into you. Take off your shawl."

The deadly tube was still pointed at her form, and Mother Mix slowly obeyed the order.

"Lively," sternly said Grace. "Throw it over to me."

The shawl was thrown to her, and fell at her feet.

"Now take off your dress and throw it to me."

"My dress?" hoarsely whispered Mother Mix.

"No delay," cried Grace. "Throw me your dress or I'll help you."

The dress was taken off and thrown to her.

"Now turn your back to me," the girl ordered.

"If you look around before I give you permission, I'll fire upon you."

The old woman turned her back to her, and the girl hastily donned the dress, and placed the shawl over her head.

She was forced to hold the weapon in her mouth while doing this, and the old woman must have been able to detect the fact.

Just as Grace was about taking the pistol from between her teeth, Mother Mix suddenly turned like a top, and with extended hands leaped like a huge cat upon the young girl.

CHAPTER IX.

"HE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY LOST AND DEAD PAST LIFE!"

POLICE CAPTAIN MOORE was not a man to do things by halves.

He had taken an unaccountable liking to Will Waters, and was eager to serve the lad.

The day after the young farmer was consigned to his cell, Moore and Brant took a trip up the river to Yonkers.

The police captain was ordinarily attired, and attracted no attention.

They went straight to the post-office of the town, and Moore asked to see the postmaster.

That gentleman appeared, and the policeman showed his badge and introduced himself.

"The letters addressed to Farmer Waters come here, do they not?" asked Moore.

"They do."

"His registered letters, also?"

"Yes."

"You hold his receipt for the registered letters delivered to him?"

"Oh, no," replied the postmaster. "I send his receipt to the receiving-office from which the letter came, and the carrier delivers the receipt to the sender, thus proving to him that his letter had gone straight and correctly to its destination."

"But he has received quite a large number of registered letters, has he not?"

"No, only about four a year."

"All from the same party?"

"Yes. I can remember that they were all from the same party," said the postmaster.

"Can you remember his name?"

"Yes, the name of the sender of those registered letters was Harvey Gale."

Moore and Brant regarded one another with glances of surprise.

"Gale," muttered Brant; "the very name under which the young man is accused."

"It's rather remarkable," muttered the police captain. "Well, sir, can you remember this Gale's address?"

"Not his address, but I know that he lives in Brooklyn, and that the letters came from there. I have had these registered letters pass through my hands for so many years that I could not help taking notice of the fact that they came from Harvey Gale, Brooklyn. If you inquire at that office, you can make sure of getting the address of the Harvey Gale in question."

"Thank you," said Moore. "Come on, Brant."

They left the town at once, taking the train to New York, both being anxious to hunt up the sender of the registered letters.

In a few hours they were standing in the Brooklyn post-office, and were applying for information to the registered-letter clerk.

In a few minutes they had obtained possession of the desired information.

They had Gale's address.

"We'll go together to this man," decided the police captain. "First, however, we'll make inquiries about him."

In the vicinity of Gale's home, they ascertain-

ed that the latter lived a very quiet life, was looked upon as a gentleman of wealth, had no wife, and but one child, a son, who was a broker's clerk in New York.

This information was gleaned from the butcher and baker who supplied the establishment.

Brant and Moore again stared at one another.

"They accuse Will of being this very clerk," Brant gasped.

"True, but if it were Gale's son, why did he not come to the side of his child when he was in such danger?" Moore questioned.

"That's so."

"This thing is getting as significant as mysterious," Moore went on. "The supposed parents of Will Waters deny that he is their son, and here we have ascertained that old Waters receives money four times a year from the man whose son is charged with the crime of murder. What can be the meaning of this? Who is this Will? He cannot be Harvey Gale's son, or else Gale would have gone to him. Furthermore, what is the nature of the connection between Will, Farmer Waters, and this Harvey Gale?"

They could only look blankly at each other.

The further they investigated into this case the more mysterious and puzzling it became.

They were in a regular maze, and could not see their way out.

"One thing keeps growing on me as I proceed with this matter," the police captain stated. "I am growing confident of the fact that Will is innocent of the charge against him, and that he is the victim of some deep and villainous scheme."

"I think the same."

"I am going to stick to him, and get him clear."

"I'm with you."

That was all they said, but they clasped hands on it, and this hearty compact secured young Will two valuable friends.

Together they proceeded to the handsome mansion occupied by Harvey Gale, and rung the bell.

The servant asked for their names, and Captain Moore sent in his card.

A moment later the servant came back and requested them to follow him into the parlor.

When they were ushered into the handsome room they were met by Harvey Gale, who came forward with an inquiring look on his face.

"Captain Moore?" he inquired, looking from one to the other.

"I am Captain Moore," replied the policeman, closely scrutinizing his host.

Brant kept his eyes riveted on Harvey Gale's face, while into his own orbs there crept a strange, mystified expression, as though his mind were trying to clinch at that long-lost past.

"And what is the purpose of this visit to me?" asked Gale.

"Where is your son?" abruptly asked the police captain.

"I have been informed that he has been arrested on the charge of killing his employer," answered Gale, with a mournful expression on his face. "I received the news yesterday, and was so greatly prostrated I have been unable to go to him. I beg of you, gentlemen, tell me if he is well."

"Oh, yes, he's well," rejoined Moore. "You ought to see him."

"I shall go to see him this very day," said Gale. "I must go to him, though I still feel weak and sick."

"You don't look so terribly prostrated, I must say," remarked Moore. "I would like to know whether you were too sick to write to your correspondent at Yonkers?"

"My corespondent at Yonkers?" the other inquired, repeated.

"Yes, old Farmer Waters," Moore returned.

"Old Farmer Waters! I have no friend or corespondent of that name, I'm sure," Gale asserted.

"You're a liar!" very positively said Captain Moore.

"I'm sure he is," asserted Brant.

"See here, sirs, it is not my pleasure to be insulted in my own house by strangers," hotly cried Gale. "I know nothing of you or the party you name. You will oblige me by leaving my house at once, or I'll have you kicked from the door by my servants."

"No, you won't," Moore growled out.

"Why not?" asked Gale, but he paled slightly, and shifted uneasily under the keen eye of the police captain.

"Because you dare not," asserted Moore. "I don't know you, but I know your face, and know the company I've seen you in more than once. It will not take me very long to trace down your antecedents, and I'll soon know exactly what you are."

"I am a gentleman," proudly said Gale.

"You're not," snapped Moore. "You're a rascal and I'll soon bring the truth home to you. Come along, my friend."

With Brant he left the house. Outside the mansion, Brant turned to his friend.

"Moore," he said, "that man's face comes to me like a bright vision of some forgotten dream. Trust me, he had something to do with my lost and dead past life."

Grace put out both hands to stop her, forgetting that she had a pistol in her mouth in the excitement of the moment.

The old woman did not attempt to strike, but she caught at the girl with her skinny hands.

She got Grace by the shoulders and rushed her back toward one of the walls.

Poor Grace came against the solid wall with a crash that nearly knocked the breath out of her.

Then Mother Mix very kindly tried to trip her, but there she did not meet with success, for Grace was very nimble and not to be easily sent off her balance.

Just while this wrestling match was going on, Grace suddenly recalled to mind the fact that she was holding a pistol in her mouth.

She let go one hand, seized the revolver by the barrel, and raising it on high struck down upon the old woman's head.

It was a successful blow.

The old woman was stunned, and fell to the floor.

Grace laid down the revolver and turning the old woman over, tied her hands behind her.

Then rearranging the garments she had taken from the hag, Grace took up the weapon again and passed out of the room.

As soon as she was outside the door she bent herself double in imitation of the old hag, drawing the shawl around her head as she had seen Mother Mix do.

She walked down one pair of not over-clean stairs, and passed a man who was coming up in a thoughtful way.

Grace's heart beat fast, but the man merely glanced at her and supposing that she was the old hag, passed on without bestowing on her a second glance.

"One danger passed," murmured the girl. "Oh, if I can only reach the street."

Slowly, and with bent form and face well concealed, she proceeded on her way.

She passed down the lower pair of stairs and reached the hallway that led to the front door.

A large man, with a coarse, brutal face, was sitting in an arm-chair near the door.

The girl paused, undecided whether to attempt to pass this man or not.

The latter turned in his chair and caught sight of the bent form.

"Halloo, Mother Mix," he called out to her.

"Have you been up to see the girl?"

Remembering Mother Mix was so hoarse as hardly to be able to speak, Grace, with her face well turned away, hissed out:

"Yes."

Then she walked toward the back of the hall with the idea of going down the basement stairs and trying to make her escape through the basement door.

But the man at the hall door put a veto to this.

"Hold on there," he cried. "I want to have a bit of gab with you, old gal."

"Got no time," hoarsely whispered the girl.

"Yer hain't? Then curse me if yer don't have to make time. I'm a reckoning," said the brute, in an angry voice. "Come back here, yer old hag, or I'll come there and screw yer neck off like a chicken's."

Grace knew that she must go to him, but she made up her mind what to do.

"I'll make him let me pass" the girl muttered to herself, grasping the pistol firmly by the butt, "or I'll clear my pathway by firing upon him."

With bent form she approached the man.

"That's right," he growled. "What does the girl say for herself?"

"She says that you must let me pass!"

As she uttered the words, the young girl suddenly stood erect and pointed the gleaming revolver at him.

"What?" cried the big brute, scarcely able to credit the evidence of his eyes.

"Let me pass!"

"Suppose I say no!" demanded the other.

"Then I shall put a bullet through your body."

"Are you sure?"

"Don't trifle with me. I'm only a girl, but I'm desperate, and I am armed. You are barring my path to liberty. The deadly bullets in this trusty weapon are more than a match for your strong arms, and I shall not hesitate to fire upon you. For the last time I say let me pass."

"And for the last time ye'r not goin' to pass," asserted the man and, with the words, he leaped toward her, his hand outstretched as though to wrest the pistol from her grasp.

"May God have mercy on your sinful soul," cried Grace, and she pulled the trigger.

Poor girl! she exhibited enough pluck, but her experience was very limited.

Without doubt she would have shot at the man and effected her escape, had it not been for one thing.

She had forgotten to raise the hammer of the revolver, or as the expression goes, to "cock" it.

In an instant the weapon was taken from her and she was rudely dashed to the floor.

Then the man called a name, and one of Grace's captors appeared.

"Take her away," ordered the guard, and poor Grace was dragged back to her prison-room.

"I'll never give up," murmured the young girl. "I'll struggle for liberty to the last."

Brant and Moore paused in front of a private house in Forty-fifth street.

"What do you want here?" asked Brant.

"Information." "About whom?" "Harvey Gale."

"And who is it that lives here?" Roger Brant asked, as Moore rung the door-bell.

"Robert McNaught, a detective who was on the regular force for many years, and who is now running a private agency of his own. He knows many rogues, and I expect that he may be of assistance to us in the identifying this Gale."

A servant admitted them, and they were at once shown into a room where Mr. McNaught sat.

He was a sharp-looking man of about forty, precisely the man any one would have picked out for a shrewd detective.

"What's wanted?" he asked.

"Do you know any one in Brooklyn by the name of Gale?"

"Strikes me familiar, but I really can't say that I do know anybody of that name."

"Give me a pencil and paper," requested Moore. "I'll draw him off."

He seized a pencil, drew a sheet of paper before him, and in a free, bold style dashed off an excellent drawing of Harvey Gale.

"That is the man," he said, giving the paper to McNaught.

The latter looked at it and nodded his head significantly.

"You know him?" Moore inquired.

"I do."

"Who is he?"

"Billy Schemer."

"And what is he?"

"The most skillful rascal I ever came across," replied McNaught. "He lives like a gentleman, is scarcely suspected by the police, and yet he is the 'brains' of a numerous community of thieves and criminals of various sorts. He plots and plans, but never does any of the work, and always gets the lion's share. He has planned all the big affairs for the past five years."

"I know my man now," said Moore. "It's war between us to the knife, and I'll hunt him down to the criminal's dock!"

CHAPTER XI.

A CLEVER TRICK.

VERY disconsolately Will sat alone in his cell wondering what was to be the end and outcome of the strange dilemma in which he was placed.

He knew that he was not a murderer. He knew that his case was one of mistaken identity, but the knowledge, however comforting to mind and conscience, did not in any degree lessen his peril.

"Two gents to see you."

Will looked up as one of the jailers called through the wicket bars.

Then the door was opened, and in walked the district attorney with Harvey Gale.

Gale made a straight dive for Will.

He threw his arms around the young man's neck, and in a broken, faint and sobbing tone cried out:

"My poor—poor Charley: my poor, erring boy!"

The district attorney's eyes snapped, and he glanced significantly at the jailer.

The latter nodded.

"Clear case," he commented.

"Sure," decidedly responded the public prosecutor.

As for Will he was so astonished for a moment that he was unable to move or speak, while Harvey Gale kept murmuring:

"My poor boy, my misguided boy, my poor Charley."

But Will came to his senses, and released himself from the much-affected Gale.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"Who am I?" cried Gale, throwing up his hands.

"What! don't you know my face? Oh, Charley! don't you know your father?"

"Well, since my supposed parents denied me, I really can't say that I do," replied Will. "But I'll swear that you're not my father."

"What! you disown me?" sorrowfully said Gale.

He was a good actor, this Harvey Gale, and his tone was extremely sorrowful as he spoke the words, looking appealingly toward the young prisoner.

"I do not disown you," returned the young farmer.

"I never belonged to you or you to me. I never saw you before in all my life. Moreover, my name is not Charley. I know not what your intentions may be, whether you are speaking under a mistake, or trying to plot my death; but I do know that my name is not Charley Gale, and I'm not your son. I am the victim of a case of mistaken identity, and I also fear the victim of a plot, too."

"My God, this is awful!" cried Harvey Gale, turning wildly to the waiting district attorney. "My only child—my cherished son—turns from me! What can be the reason of this? Oh, this will surely break my heart, for he was all the world to me!"

He staggered back as though he were overcome.

Will, much puzzled by all this, sat down upon his cot and cast his eyes on the floor.

"It is quite useless for you to excite yourself further," said the district attorney. "The reason of his denying you is quite evident. He intends to maintain the plea of mistaken identity, and therefore he cannot recognize you. However, I am afraid he is a hardened young man."

With a sorrowful shake of his head, Harvey Gale left the cell with the delighted prosecutor.

"I hate that man—hate him fiercely and instinctively," cried Will, when they were gone. "Something tells me that he is my foe, and yet when I think of it, I can see that I do resemble him. Oh, God! what is the terrible mystery at the bottom of all this?"

Roger Brant had parted with Moore, and was walking along, when he was accosted in the street by a well dressed and very gentlemanly-looking man.

"This is Mr. Brant?" inquiringly said the stranger.

"I am the man," was the reply.

"I see that you don't know me. Well, it is quite natural, for you have not seen me in a great many years," went on the stranger. "But I knew you by a different name twenty-five years ago."

The captain started.

"What?" cried. "Can it then be possible that I am to recover my lost memory?"

"I certainly can tell you everything about yourself," kindly replied the stranger. "I will not tell you my name now, but if I can recall the past to you, I'll wager that you recognize me!"

"Oh, speak—speak!" cried Brant, in an agitated tone, fairly trembling with excitement.

"Speak, and recall the past to me!"

"Not here," said the other. "Even now you are shaking from head to foot, and if I were to startle you, why, you might faint away. I don't wish a scene in the street. Come with me, my old friend, we'll have a glass of beer or wine together, and then I'll tell you what you wish to know."

"Gladly will I go with you," Brant returned.

His companion led him to a saloon on the next block.

"Please give us a private room," requested he, of the bartender.

"There's one at the end of the room," said the bartender. "Here's the key."

He handed the key to Brant's companion.

The latter walked down the bar-room and unlocked the door of the private room.

They entered the little apartment. It contained a table and two chairs.

"Sit down. What will you have to drink?" asked the stranger.

"I'll take a glass of beer," returned Brant, who was very anxious for his companion to speak the words that were to recall the past.

The stranger thrust his head out of the door and called out:

"Two beers, and be remarkably lively about it."

"All right," came back the answer from the bartender.

"Before I tell you anything," remarked this cool stranger, who was remarkably calm under these rather exciting circumstances, "I want you to tell me how much you remember of your past life."

"Nothing," Brant replied.

"Nothing whatever?"

"Not a thing," answered Brant. "It is all a blank to me."

"Then I have a most delightful task before me," said the other.

"Ah! the lager is here."

The bartender brought in two glasses of beer, placed one in front of the stranger and the other before Brant.

"Your health," said the stranger, and lifted his glass.

"The same to you," was the response, and the glasses were drained.

"Now," began Brant's companion, as he set his glass down on the table and wiped his lips. "to begin with my story. Do you remember one of your early playmates, a boy by the name of Smith, a boy with long, fair hair?"

"Smith—a boy with long, fair hair," Brant repeated, putting one hand to his head in a troubled manner. "I really don't know that I remember any boy by that name."

"Try hard," continued the other. "Try to think of a pretty village on the bank of the Hudson, old houses with ivy growing around them, and a red, brick church. Try to remember two girls, twins, named Jennie and Hannah. Can't you remember those girls?"

"No—no," murmured Brant. "It is all vailed to me."

"Think well," the other urged.

"But I can't think" returned Brant, his right hand pressed to his head in a painful manner. "My poor head is aching frightfully. The room is whirling around."

The eyes of his companion flashed in a satisfied manner.

"The excitement is making you a little dizzy," he said. "Just sit still for a minute."

Brant mastered the dizziness for a moment by a powerful effort, and glanced keenly at the man who faced him.

blinded Brant, and as he stepped aside he drew a short club from the inner pocket of his coat.

Watching for a good opportunity, he drew back the ugly weapon, and in a savage manner dealt Brant a blow on the head that sent him reeling senseless to the floor.

"That settles him," he growled, and then put away his club and left the private room, locking the door and carrying away the key with him.

"Where's the cove?" asked the sharp-looking bartender, as the other gave him the key.

"Why, locked in there, of course," answered the rascal. "I didn't dare chance a noise with him, so I knocked him silly with my little pet. However, the dose was all right."

"When will you come for him?"

"Oh, I'll probably cart him off this evening," the other replied, and walked out of the room.

"It was a good job, and very easy done, too," he muttered. "How well that neat little stall about old times did take! I wonder who he is, and what he is? Bah! what do I care, as long as Billy Schemer is up to time with the cash."

He took one of the Brooklyn ferries and passed over the water.

Arrived in Brooklyn, he went straight to Harvey Gale's house and rung the bell.

He was admitted to the presence of that smart rascal.

"Well?" the latter inquired.

"He's caged," the visitor responded.

"You're sure that you've not mistaken the man?"

"Sure pop. He caught at the lost-memory dodge like a trout after a fly."

"Then it's all right," muttered Gale, in a gratified manner. "Where have you left him?"

"At the Shady Saloon."

"That's a good spot. I suppose he is well drugged?"

"You bet."

"Well, here is the money I promised you," handing him a small roll of bills, "and you can get some of the boys to help you bring him over in a coach to-night."

"You want him here?"

"I do."

"You shall have him," and putting the money in his pocket, the visitor departed.

"I shall beat them all," muttered Gale. "Now it remains for me to secure the conviction of that boy!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL.

THE court-room was crowded, for there was an intense interest felt and manifested by all in the trial of the young man who had been arrested for the murder of the old broker, Morton Gaines.

The fact that the prisoner was a young man of good address, and also that he protested his innocence in the strongest terms, and claimed to be the victim of a case of mistaken identity, caused the general public to take considerable interest in the young farmer.

When Will was led into the court-room, he looked around for the two men whom alone he could really look upon as friends in his hour of peril.

He saw Captain Moore close by his side, but he looked in vain for that other friendly face.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"Brant?" Moore inquired.

"Yes."

"I don't know. He has not been seen for three days."

"Missing?" cried Will.

"Yes, missing. I greatly fear he has been foully dealt with."

"But by whom?"

"I don't know. I thought the man did not have an enemy."

"I thought the same myself," returned the boy, "but I have got some enemies, and vindictive ones, too. That Gale I look upon as my worst enemy."

"For what reason?"

"None. I hate him instinctively, and know that he is my foe. Look, there he comes, and I know by the look on his face that he means to try to convict me."

"By swearing that you are his son?" Moore asked.

"Yes."

"I am on his track," quietly said the police captain. "He has got the best of me now, but I'm bound to come in winner at the end of the race."

"Charley Gale to the bar," called out the clerk of the court, and Will was forced to step forward.

Then the trial began.

The old housekeeper employed by the deceased came forward and was sworn.

She testified to the burglary, and also to finding the dying broker on the floor of the parlor.

Then she told the court in a simple manner all that Gaines said when dying.

Her story was simple and truthful, and was not to be shaken.

Will's lawyer, one of the smartest in the city, did not waste much time with her, nor with the police-man who came after her, for their story did not in any way affect the defense that he was prepared to institute for his client.

Will had told him everything concerning himself, and his counsel had made up his mind what to do.

He had summoned the old couple down from the country, and had likewise brought Mark Smith, the constable, and two or three more reputable rustics.

Harvey Gale sat near the prisoner, his handkerchief held to his eyes.

It was whispered around the court that this was the father of the prisoner, and his sorrowful attitude gained him sympathy from all.

Farmer Waters was called, and the question was put to him:

"Do you recognize the prisoner at the bar?"

"I've seen him once before, in a court-room," Waters answered.

"Never before?"

"Never before."

"Do you not recognize him as your son, Will Waters?" asked the lawyer.

"I don't. He is not my son, and I can swear to it."

It was about the same thing with the old woman.

"My son!" she cried, peering at Will over her spectacles. "No, sir, he isn't my boy. I allow he looks something like my Will, but he is not my son."

"You swear positively that he is not your son?"

"I do."

"Remember you are under oath."

Then sharply said Will's lawyer, with his keen eyes fixed on her face:

"Answer this question: Have you really got a son?"

"Yes," she answered, in an impulsive and quite passionate manner. "I have got a son, and God knows where he is."

Harvey Gale, who had looked up at this question, again covered his eyes with his handkerchief.

Will, the lawyer and everybody else were impressed with the truthful tone in which the old woman answered the question.

The lawyer let her go, and called up Mark Smith.

Smith positively swore that he knew and recognized the prisoner at the bar as Will Waters, and the son of the old couple who had just been exonerated.

"I have known him fourteen years," testified Smith. "The old couple always claimed him as their son, and there are hundreds who can say the same thing as I do. Furthermore, I can swear, so help me God, that I saw the prisoner at the bar in Yonkers at ten o'clock on the night the murder in question was committed."

Others that followed him identified Will in the most positive manner.

"Three or four are as good as hundreds," Will's lawyer had said to him. "If the jury will not believe four, then they would not believe a thousand witnesses against the old couple."

It was evident to Will and the lawyer that the jury believed in old Waters and his wife, and discredited the sworn testimony of Smith and the others.

It was with something of a flourish that the district attorney called up Harvey Gale.

"Mr. Gale, do you recognize the prisoner at the bar?"

Gale wiped his eyes as though he were blinded, and looked sorrowfully at Will.

"Yes," he answered, in a sobbing sort of voice, "it is my poor, erring boy, my son Charley."

Then stretching forth his hands toward the attentive jurymen, the clever rascal cried:

"Oh, gentlemen, have pity on my poor boy. He did not mean to do any wrong. He is young. He was led into his sinful ways by his evil companions. Some of you may be fathers; think of your own dear children, and do not kill my poor boy. He was young, thoughtless, and wild. Oh, gentlemen, have pity on a suffering father, and—"

"Take him away," shouted Will, for his blood was boiling. "He is not my father, and if I could be saved by his hypocritical pleading I would refuse it. I am not his son and he is not my father, but one of my foes. He is trying to establish my identity in order that my guilt may be proved. Keep on, you treacherous villain. Your deceit will yet be laid bare, and your base villainy exposed to the world."

With a mournful shake of his head the schemer was led away, apparently overcome, mopping his eyes with his handkerchief in a vigorous style.

The result of the case was a foregone conclusion. Everybody knew that the prisoner was to be found guilty of the charge.

The portrait of Charley Gale, produced by the district attorney, had a most powerful influence against the young farmer, and each of the twelve jurymen looked convinced as he noted the striking resemblance between the fac-simile and the supposed original.

Will's lawyer made an eloquent defense, but it was plainly seen by him that the jurors were already settled in their convictions, and he said to Captain Moore, when he resumed his seat:

"The boy's a goner."

"Then if he's found guilty I want you to ask that sentence be deferred."

"All right," the lawyer responded.

The district attorney summed up quite briefly; the jury was charged by the judge, and retired for half an hour, when they announced that they had agreed upon a verdict.

"What is your verdict?" asked the clerk of the court.

There was a solemn hush as the stern-faced foreman replied:

"We find the prisoner guilty of murder in the first degree!"

CHAPTER XIII.

TWO JAIL-BIRDS.

"POLICE CAPTAIN MOORE:—

"Require you here to identify Bolen and Mapes, forgers, and take them away."

"(Signed) MORGAN, Superintendent W— Police."

This was the telegram handed to Captain Moore on the afternoon of the trial, just as the verdict of "guilty" had been brought in by the jury.

Morgan, the party whose name was signed to the communication, Moore knew to be the efficient superintendent of police in an enterprising town but a few miles from New York, and Bolen and Mapes were men who had executed clever forgeries on business men living within his precinct.

"Good boy, Morgan," he muttered, re-reading the telegram. "If you have got the right parties it will be a big thing for me. I must go to W— this afternoon."

Will's lawyer was asking that the sentence of court might be deferred for a few days.

It being not an unusual request, the court granted it.

"Why did you do this?" asked Will of Moore. "I heard you make the request of the lawyer. Why did you desire that it be put off?"

Moore bent his head down and whispered in the young man's very attentive ear:

"Because I don't want the stigma to rest on you of having sentence passed on you."

"But they will pass sentence on me very soon."

"No, they will not."

"How will you prevent it?" asked Will, in surprise.

"By taking you away," replied the captain. "I intend to rescue you from jail before the three days' grace has expired."

"God grant it," muttered Will. "My enemies have tried to swear my life away, and if I were free I might ferret out the mystery, discover the real murderer, and vindicate my good name."

Then he was led away by the officers, and the captain left the court-room.

He arranged for his departure with his superiors, and then took the first obtainable train for the town of W—.

It was quite late at night when he reached W—, but he went at once to the office of the sender of the telegram.

"Ah, Moore, I've bagged the birds for you," exclaimed Morgan, when the captain entered.

"I'm sure that I'm right."

"I hope so, replied Moore. "It's going to be a big thing for me if I can take them back."

"Bring in those coves we captured at the station," called out Morgan, to an officer, and the man departed on his errand.

"We captured them both at the railroad station," said Morgan. "Two trains met there, stopped for lunch, and these two chaps met on the platform, one having come from the East, and the other from the West. They had arranged to meet an' stay here, I suppose, with the idea of working some of the merchants of the town."

"Very likely," assented the captain. "They are pretty clever, but are only green hands at the biz. However, there are three diff'rnt charges against them, and I think that I can send them up for fully twenty years."

"Here they are," announced the officer who had been sent after the prisoners, and he marched two men, who were handcuffed, into the office.

Moore looked at them very closely.

"They're the men," he said, in a very decided tone. "This one is Bolen, and he has altered his whiskers or his mustache since I saw him last, but I know him well."

The man that he referred to was that accomplished swindler and very clever billiard-sharp who had brought Charley Gale into trouble and then basely deserted him, and left him penniless—Wentworth.

"You don't know me," he blustered, and looked straight into the captain's bright eyes.

"Don't I?" sneered Moore. "We shall see. You're wonderfully altered, but I can swear to you, and I'm goin' to send you up for a solid term of years."

Wentworth cast his eyes on the floor, and between his teeth ground out the single word:

"Never!"

The captain did not hear it.

"Take him away," he ordered. "I'll stop over night, and carry them to New York in the morning."

The prisoners were led away, and the captain went to a hotel to stay over night.

In the morning he arose early, and, after breakfast, took his prisoners and departed.

They were both handcuffed, and the key was given into the captain's hands by Morgan.

Moore took a double-seat in the smoking-car with his prisoners, and the day being fine, opened the window.

Silent and glum-looking, they sat opposite.

The captain believed that they had been well looked to by the men at W—, and, feeling quite at ease, he lolled back in his seat and lighted a cigar.

The train rushed away through the early morning mists toward the next station ten miles distant.

Suddenly, when about half the distance had been passed over, Wentworth rose up with a swift motion from his seat.

His hands were free. Somehow he had liberated them from the clasp of the steel bracelets.

chances. Moore might catch his leg if he attempted to spring over him, and if the attempt to escape failed now, the forger knew that he was surely booked for twenty years in prison.

All this flashed with the swiftness of lightning through his brain, and like a flash he turned on his heel, and launched himself head foremost through the window, disappearing like a flash of fire.

Scarcely had the forger's heels passed from view when Captain Moore was on his feet.

Mapes sat quietly enough in his seat, and made no attempt to follow his pal.

Moore reached up his hand and caught at the bell-cord.

He gave a vigorous pull; within an instant the signal came from the locomotive to "down brakes," and with a squeaking and scraping the train came to a sudden halt. The conductor came rushing up to Moore to know what was the matter, and the captain made him understand what had occurred.

"Without doubt I shall find him lying by the side of the track," mused the captain: "He must either be dead or else dying."

"I'll wait five minutes," said the conductor. "Lively."

Taking a brakeman with him the captain ran back along the iron road, looking for Wentworth.

But never a sign of the forger did they discover, and at the end of five minutes' time a whistle from the train recalled them, and they were forced to go back to the cars with the conviction coming over them that the rascal had made a good move, and had really effected an escape.

"I'll stop at the next station," concluded Captain Moore, "leave my prisoner, get a good dog, go back there, and track that fellow down!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HAND OF FATE.

We will now turn our attention to Mr. Wentworth, *alias* Bolen.

When he made that headlong leap from the window of the car, he took fearful odds against the certainty of imprisonment, for in all probability not one man in a thousand would have made that jump and lived an hour after.

Wentworth, however, was fortunate in his desperate attempt.

He landed on a particularly soft and yielding knoll, where the moss grew thick and yielding, striking his hands first, then his shoulders and breast, and last his legs.

The train was going at a rapid rate when he left it, and therefore he collide with the mossy bank very forcibly. He was half-stunned for an instant, and then got upon his feet, feeling none the worse for it's desperate move.

"I must skip!" cried Wentworth. "In two minutes that captain will be back here. Here goes for the woods, country roads, farm-houses, anything except the towns until this affair blows over."

Adjusting his disarranged dress, the clever rascal struck off "across lots," with the idea of gaining the nearest high-road and walking along it.

He had not been walking for over two minutes, when a severe pain in his back made him aware that he had racked his frame more severely than he had thought.

So violent and agonizing was the pain that Wentworth was forced to lie flat on the ground, in which easy position the pain abated.

He was forced to lie there fully a half-hour, a severe pain prostrating every attempt to regain his feet. At length, to his great joy, he was able to move away from the spot.

He had lost much valuable time, and feared that should Moore come back he might overtake and recapture him.

He kept on his way, forced to move rather slowly, and at length reached a road.

Along this he walked, taking an occasional rest by the way.

His back began to feel better, and he was stepping at a livelier rate, when he suddenly came upon a farm-house standing close to the road.

He was extremely thirsty. With the purpose of obtaining a drink he walked to the side door of the house and knocked on the panels.

A little girl came to the door and asked what he wanted.

"Please give me a drink. I'm very thirsty," said Wentworth, speaking in an ordinary tone.

Wentworth had a peculiar voice, not very loud, but it had a strange, metallic ring that was sufficiently odd to distinguish it from hundreds of other voices.

Scarcely had he asked for the glass of water when a cry rung out from an adjoining room, and forth rushed a young man with a book in his hand.

"At last!" he shrieked. "You human devil, once more we are face to face!"

It was Charley Gale.

The young man's eyes were fairly flashing, his face was flushed with sudden anger, and his hands were clinched with a spasm of fury. He seemed to be a very demon as he glanced at Wentworth, and the latter recoiled.

He was not a coward, but his heart failed him when he saw the insane fury of the young man whom he had led astray, robbed, and deserted.

"At last, Sam Wentworth, we are face to face again," cried Gale. "This is the moment I've longed for, and it's come sooner than I expected."

He glared almost insanely at the forger.

"Sam Wentworth," he raved, "you made me what I am. You met me when I was only a foolish boy, and you made me a criminal. I have sworn to kill you for this, and now I'm going to keep my word."

Wentworth was actually terrified, and when he

saw Charley draw a knife from his hip-pocket he turned short and ran away.

With a cry of hate Charley Gale ran after him, the glistening knife in his right hand.

Wentworth knew that Charley meant all he said. He realized that the young man hated him with a vindictiveness that only such a case could excite, and knowing that his life was in danger the forger ran as he had never ran before.

It appeared that the little girl was the only inmate of the house other than Gale, and she ran into the kitchen and cowered behind the stove.

Being rather confused as well as alarmed Wentworth ran around the house instead of taking to the road.

He had gone around twice, with Gale close behind, when the latter suddenly slipped on the grass and fell.

Wentworth did not trouble him, but ran out through the gate, and ran back along the road which had brought him to the house where his deadliest foe abided.

In an instant Charlie Gale was on his feet again, and with the knife held firmly in his hand, he dashed out of the gate and after his hated foe, his face flaming with fury.

Suddenly, after he had gone about five hundred yards from the house, the agonizing pain came into Wentworth's back, and caught him so severely that he instantly fell to the dusty road.

In an instant Gale was upon him.

He knelt down in the road, and grasping Wentworth by the throat, he raised his knife for a deadly blow.

"Mercy!" gasped Wentworth.

"Mercy!" shrieked the infuriated young man.

"You talk of mercy to me, whom you have ruined and wrecked? Mercy! for what, and wherefore? Because with your cunning trickery you led me into gambling, then flattered me into theft? or shall I have mercy on you because you—yes, you, base, infamous devil! you, son of Satan, placed this very weapon in my hand and bade me strike a blow that made me a murderer, ruined my life and cursed me for all time? Shall I have mercy on you for this, or because you left me penniless after you made me a haunted murderer?"

He paused, with the knife still in the air, and his flashing eyes fairly burnt into the cringing, affrighted, prostrate man.

"Spare me!" faintly pleaded Wentworth, in an appealing tone. "I know I have wronged you. But I have money, and I will make—"

"Have you got money?" interrupted the other.

"Then I'll first take your life, and then your money. Sam Wentworth, you made me a murderer, and now I am going to murder you!"

"Mercy!" gasped the wretch.

"Ask it of the devil, your master," cried Gale.

"Ask it not of the demon that you have created!"

With a wolfish growl of rage he struck the fatal blow.

The knife was buried to the hilt in Wentworth's breast.

Without a sound, the forger threw up his hands, and lay silent and limp before his slayer.

"There, you fiend," exclaimed Charley Gale, looking down into the bloodless face. "You created a demon, and he has destroyed you. Bah! What do I care now? This is my second murder, and I have been a thief for months. The old man still cherishes the idea of making a good man of me; but I'm in for a life of crime and adventure. Now for the rascal's money."

He searched through the pockets of coat, vest and pants. No money in them.

He then carefully felt all over the garments. An unnatural thickness in the lining of the coat led him to rip the cloth, and he found the money, a number of greenbacks and some bonds.

These he placed in his pocket and then stood up.

Acting under a sudden inspiration, he bent down, seized Wentworth's right hand, and clasped the cold fingers over the hilt of the knife as it protruded from the bleeding breast.

"That will lend the idea of suicide, and I can do something more to further the impression," muttered the young murderer.

He took a note-book from his inner pocket, and with a lead pencil wrote the following words:

"To those who may find me:—

"My name is Wentworth, and I belong to the city of New York. I am a hunted man and tired of my life. I have nobody to care for me, therefore I put an end to my miserable existence. May God have mercy on my soul. Bury me decently."

"(Signed), SAM WENTWORTH."

This note he pinned to the lapel of Wentworth's coat, and then dragged the body behind a cluster of low bushes at the side of the road, which was a by-way, but little traveled, and of a lonely character.

"Now," muttered Gale, as he moved away from the spot, "with plenty of money I can start away on my career of crime. In the course of an hour I shall be off. Aha, revenge is sweet."

As he ceased speaking a strange sound smote upon the air. 'Twas the baying of a bloodhound following a human trail!

CHAPTER XV.

DAYLIGHT AHEAD!

CAPTAIN MOORE followed out the programme he had arranged.

He left the train at the stopping-place, and marched the prisoner to the office of the deputy sheriff, where he made himself known.

The deputy comprehended the demands of the case at once.

"I want to leave this bird in safe quarters till I return. Then take a wagon, drive down to the place where Bolen jumped off, and with the aid of a good dog I could track him down. I've got the fellow's hat."

"I can furnish you with the horse, wagon, and a bloodhound who will track your man for a hundred miles," said the deputy. "And I'll go along with you, too."

Half an hour later they were on the spot where Wentworth had made his leap: the deputy gave the cap to the bloodhound to smell of, and then sent the intelligent animal off to find the fugitive's track.

In a moment a yell from the hound announced that he had found the track, his master gave him the word, and with his nose to the ground, away he went.

Close behind him followed the deputy and the captain.

At a slow trot the dog kept on till he reached the road.

Over the fence went the animal, and the men after him.

The dog ran along the road for some time, and then suddenly came to a halt.

He sniffed at the ground for a moment, then threw his nose in the air, and after a brief moment of hesitation ran behind a clump of bushes.

"He has found something," announced the deputy.

He and the captain followed the dog behind the bushes.

There lay Wentworth, with the knife in his breast, his hand grasping the hilt of the weapon, while the note that Gale had written fluttered on his breast.

"The devil!" cried Moore.

"The hound has run the game to the ground," said the deputy.

"Yes, but the game is dead," returned the surprised captain. "The rascal has committed suicide. Yes, so the note says. He must have been crazy to attempt such an escape, and then to take his own life. But he must—"

"Hold on," requested the deputy. "That man is trying to open his eyes."

"So he is!" cried Moore. "I'll revive him."

He drew forth a pocket-flask, and allowed some of the brandy to trickle down Wentworth's throat.

The latter shivered, started, and then opened his eyes.

"Where the deuce am I?" he murmured, and then he caught sight of the captain. "Ah, I'm not dead after all!"

"Which is equal to saying that I look neither like an angel nor a devil," smiled Moore, kneeling down by the forger. "What did you want to try and kill yourself for?"

"Jumping from the train?"

"No, stabbing yourself."

"I did not."

"What?"

"I was stabbed."

As he uttered the word, a spasm of pain crossed his face.

"Stabbed!" cried Moore. "By whom?"

The forger could not answer; the captain poured some more of the brandy down his throat.

It somewhat restored Wentworth to himself, but the knife that was still buried near his heart seemed to cause him agony.

With an impatient gesture he tore the blade from his breast.

The blood spurted forth in a crimson stream.

"You are doomed!" solemnly said the captain.

"You can't live another ten minutes with that big hole near to your heart."

"I know it," returned the forger. "But at least I can die easy. I was met and stabbed by a pal I deserted. He is probably in the next house beyond here."

"Tell me his name, and I'll put him through."

"Cha ley Gale."

"Charley Gale?" cried Moore.

"Yes, the true Gale. You chaps in the city have made a blunder. The rascal Charley Gale, the murderer, just put the knife in me. He—he—"

The forger choked; he tried to rise up; with a supreme effort he sat erect, and pointed ahead toward the direction of the house where he had met Gale.

"I was—there," he faintly and brokenly uttered.

"The hound—he—trai—"

And then he ceased to speak, and fell back on the ground.

His jaw fell.

"Dead," the deputy announced.

"Yes, and evidently robbed by the chap who murdered him," added the captain, pointing to the ripped-open coat. "Let him be there, and we will try to secure his murderer. He was of the idea that the hound could take his trail to the house where Gale is, or was."

"So it seemed," returned the other, and calling up his hound the deputy set him to work.

In a moment the dog had found the trail, and away he went.

In three minutes' time he was at the gate of the farm-house.

Just as the men came up to the gate, also, Charley Gale came walking down the pathway with a valise in his hand.

Captain Moore uttered an irrepressible cry of surprise.

"My God!" he cried. "If I didn't know that I left Will Waters in his cell in New York, I'd swear that he stood before me now. No wonder that the young farmer was arrested."

And really the resemblance that existed between Charley Gale and the young farmer was striking in a very remarkable degree.

But Captain Moore recovered in an instant, and assumed a most simple expression.

"You are young Mr. Egan, are you not?" he asked of Charley, as the latter halted inside the gate.

"This is the Egan farm, isn't it?"

"No, sir," replied Charley, opening the gate and coming out, "this is known as the Smith farm, and—"

"And you are known as Charley Gale, and my prisoner," put in the captain, clapping his hand on the young man's shoulder. "You see that I know you. Ah, take your hand down from your breast, or I'll break your arm with a bullet from this!"

And he held up a revolver before Charley's eyes.

The latter turned pale.

"Who are you?" he asked, lowering his hand.

"Captain Moore of the New York police."

"What do you arrest me for?"

"Two murders—that of Gaines, the broker, and also the very recent murder of your former pal, and I'm going to take you in, dead or alive."

"Then I'll take my chances," cried the young criminal, and with a sudden blow he struck the pistol from Captain Moore's hand, and then hit out again, with the idea of knocking the latter down.

But Moore was quicker than Charley expected.

He parried the blow with his right, struck out in a terrific manner with his left, and felled the young murderer to the ground.

"That settles him," said Moore, as he bent down and secured strong handcuffs on the slender wrists of the prisoner. "The mystery may be cleared now. At any rate I see daylight ahead."

It was about nine o'clock on the evening of the day that witnessed the thrilling events narrated in the few previous chapters.

The warden of the prison where Will Western was confined opened the door to admit a visitor to his private office. It was Captain Moore, and with him was a prisoner who was handcuffed, and, strangely enough, also masked.

The captain seated his prisoner, and then held a long whispered conversation with the warden.

"Let me see his face," at length requested the warden.

The captain raised the mask from the prisoner's face, revealing the pale features of the young murderer, Charley Gale.

"That will do," whispered the warden, who was evidently astonished.

"You agree to it?"

"I do."

"Then let us take him down to the cell ourselves."

"Very well," assented the warden, and led the way out from the office toward the cells, Captain Moore following with his masked prisoner.

"Stay here," requested the warden, halting in front of a door and unlocking it. "I'll take him in."

He led the masked murderer into the cell. Within two minutes out he came with a prisoner who also wore a mask, but who did not have any handcuffs on.

"Take him away," ordered the warden, relocking the door. "Don't stop for any of the keepers."

Captain Moore took the right hand of the prisoner and led him out of the building.

"Pull your hat over your eyes, tear off the mask, and have nothing to say," advised the captain, and his orders were obeyed.

He led the willing prisoner along the street until he reached his home, and conducted him into a parlor.

Then the hat was drawn off from his head by Moore's companion, and he held out his hand in a grateful manner.

"God bless you," he said. "You are a true friend."

It was Will Waters!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOY FERRET TAKES THE TRAIL.

WILL sat opposite Captain Moore, in the latter's room.

"It was strange that you should meet with the real murderer in such a manner," Will asserted.

"It was fate," said Moore. "If that forger had not leaped from the train it might never have occurred."

"But how did you manage to get me traded off so easily?" asked the young farmer. "The warden ran some risk."

"Not at all," replied Moore. "You are wonderfully alike, as anybody can see. I offered him a hundred dollars to make the exchange, and gave him also my solemn oath that I was giving up to him the true Gale, the murderer of Morton Gaines. He knew that I must have a motive in desiring to make the transfer a secret instead of an open one, and very wisely concluded to take the money. Should Charley Gale be required in the morning, he will be forthcoming, and nobody will think of doubting his identity."

"And I didn't even have a good look at him," mused Will. "Never mind, I shall see him. Tell me, my true friend, what was the motive that caused you to do this secretly when it could have been done openly?"

"To deceive your enemies, for enemies you have," Moore replied. "While they are ignorant of the fact that you are free, you may accomplish some good work. I am as well satisfied as yourself that you are not a child of that old couple in the country. I am also positive that Harvey Gale knows all about you, and I have taken you away secretly in

order that you might go to him and force the truth from his lips."

"I? How?"

"You can get into the house, I am sure. Your voice is very much like Charley Gale's, and I doubt that you would have any trouble in going into Harvey Gale's house. When you are in there, just spy around, you may be able to ascertain the truth. If you fail in that, just wait for a favorable chance when he is alone. Then take the villain by the throat and tell him that you'll have the truth or his life."

"I'll do it," cried Will. "I felt in my heart when I first saw him that he was my worst enemy, and I think so still. I wonder whether I could so fully deceive him as to make him believe that I'm his own son?"

"You might," returned Moore, "but it would be an exceedingly risky game to play."

"Not at all," rejoined Will. "He thinks his own boy in the country where you found him. I can mark my face in a manner that will make me look ill and pale, and put rings under my eyes. Then I can limp into the house in the evening, and say to the first one I meet that I feel very sick, and have come home to die. If he sees me he will probably be very much alarmed, and anything strange and unnatural about me might be laid to the score of illness. Furthermore, my weak condition and melancholy will be a good shield when I don't want to answer questions he might put to me."

"By Jove! you might do it," said Moore much impressed with the idea. "If you could deceive him in that manner, you might accomplish all that we desire, ay, trap him, too. He is a villain of the worst kind, a plotter and planner, one who invents and sets in motion one half of the devilish games that are carried on here in New York. He is known by the sobriquet of Billy Schemer. Oh, if I could only—"

"There's a lady to speak with you a moment, sir," announced the servant, opening the door of the captain's room. "It's the Widow Williams, who lives next door."

"Oh, show her in at once," requested the gallant captain.

Here was something that made his heart jump. For some years he had proposed to her, only to be told that she did not desire to marry again.

A moment later the handsome and still youthful-looking widow was shown into the room.

"Good-evening," saluted Moore, and placed a chair for her.

"Thank you, Captain Moore. I suppose you heard about the abduction of my daughter?"

"I did."

"Here is a letter that I have just received, from which it seems that the game of abduction and ransom is carried on in this country as well as in Italy."

"I know that."

"The letter has been submitted to Robert McNaught, and he told me to come to you and say that it was evidently the work of Billy Schemer."

"Billy Schemer!" cried Moore, and even Will was startled to hear the man's name mentioned after so recently hearing it. "Yes, I am of the same opinion. It looks like his sort of game. She was abducted from you while you were in the country?"

"Yes, taken away in a carriage by some men in broad daylight," the widow said.

"Where from?" burst forth Will, eagerly.

"Where from, madam?"

"Up in the country, not very far from Yonkers."

"Was she stolen away on the fourth of the month?"

"Yes—yes," cried the widow. "Oh, have you seen her?"

"Wait. Is this about her general appearance?"

And he gave a description of the girl for whom he had fought so bravely within the hour that he left the Waters.

"That is my daughter," excitedly said the widow.

Then Will told them the story of the struggle in the road, and what followed, and they could only regret that he had not succeeded in securing the freedom of the girl.

"McNaught said that you had a special spite against this Schemer," said the widow to the captain, "and that you would do everything to assist me and also him to recover my daughter without the payment of this big ransom, which would leave me very poor indeed."

"Depend upon it," returned Captain Moore, "I will do ev'rything in my power."

"I will hold out an inducement—that is, if you have not changed your mind," the widow blushingly announced. "Get me back my daughter, and my hand is yours."

"Heaven grant, then, I may be successful," cried Moore.

"And suppose I rescue her," cried Will. "I am going to behead this Billy Schemer in his lair. And I may be able to rescue your daughter. What then? How am I to be rewarded?"

The widow looked at him, and then at Captain Moore.

"I can vouch for him," readily said the captain, understanding the glance. "He is a worthy and noble young man."

"Rescue her," cried the widow, "and name your own reward."

"Very well," smiled Will. "If she will have me, I'll take her. You'll marry the captain, and I shall become his son-in-law. I feel that I am destined to rescue that girl and put her in Captain Moore's arms."

When Roger Brant returned to consciousness he found that he was in some sort of a vehicle, being jolted over the stones that pave the city streets.

The vehicle in which he was riding was a carriage, and when he became accustomed to the light, he saw that two men occupied the coach with him.

His head was rather confused, and for a moment he was unable to remember what had happened to him.

Then, like a flash, all that occurred between himself and the stranger recurred to his mind.

"I am a prisoner, and they are conveying me somewhere," was the thought that came into his mind in an instant. "I will fight for my liberty."

He felt for the handle of the door and found it. He had already slightly opened the door when the men became aware of it.

"No you don't," snarled one, and he struck at Brant with his fist. He caught him on the chest, and sent him back in his seat. Brant struck back in return, and his heavy fist landed on the other's nose.

The man cried out, and fell in a heap to the bottom of the coach.

"Now for you!" shouted Brant, and he struck at the other man.

This fellow proved to be the very same one who had so cleverly deceived him, and he defended himself with the same weapon that he had used so brutally in the saloon.

He blocked Brant's heavy blow with the short club, and then struck back at him with the dangerous weapon.

The "Billy," which was heavily loaded on the end, descended on Brant's head.

The blow deprived him of sensibility, as it had done before, and without a sound he fell over on the groaning man he had struck down.

This ended the resistance of the brave man.

When he again came to sensibility, he found himself in different quarters. He was lying on something very cold that seemed like stone. He was in total darkness.

He had just got upon his feet, with the idea of examining his present quarters by the sense of feeling, when suddenly a light flashed in his eyes, and he looked up to discover that a small door, not more than eight inches square, had been opened on one side of his cell, and a man holding a lamp in his hand was now looking in upon him.

"You are Harvey Gale," spoke up Brant, recognizing the face at the opening.

"And who are you?" sarcastically said Gale. "Do you know yourself by any other name?"

"No, I do not; but I did have a different name in my early life—the life that is forgotten. You are identified with that life; I know you are."

"Do you know me?"

"Only as Harvey Gale," Brant replied.

"Then," said his jailer, "with that knowledge you shall live, and with it you shall die!"

Then the opening closed, darkness came again, and Roger Brant was alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOY FERRET AT WORK.

It was about half-past seven on the evening following Will's meeting with the Widow Williams, when the lad walked up the steps of the Gale Mansion in Brooklyn, and feebly rang the bell.

He was made up in a very skillful style, and really looked very haggard and sick. The bell was answered by Harvey Gale's trustworthy servant.

He gave one glance at the pale face, and then started back.

"Master Charley!"

"Yes," faintly responded Will, and leaned against the jamb.

"You're sick."

"Yes, sick and weary. I feel that I have come home to die. Help me to my room, and tell the old man that I have come home sick, and have gone to bed."

"I will. I will," said the servant, and he took hold of Will's arm, led him aside, and closed the door.

By this dodge Will gained two points in his favor. He made the servant believe that he was very sick and weak, and he was also enabled to learn where Charley Gale's own particular room was situated.

The servant led him up one flight of stairs and into a handsomely-furnished chamber.

Will sunk into a large chair, apparently exhausted.

"That will do," he murmured.

"Want a cup of tea or something to eat?" asked the servant.

"No, nothing. I shall go to sleep very soon."

"All right," he answered. "The boss will soon be in."

And gently closing the door, he left Will alone. In a moment the young farmer was on his feet.

He made a careful examination of the room, but found nothing of very special interest.

He ransacked the drawers of the dressing-case, and found likenesses of Charley Gale, which interested him greatly; but he found nothing that could be of service to him in his search.

There was another door in the room besides the one that had afforded him entrance. This second door was on the side of the room, and was locked on the inside.

The young man tried to obtain a view through the keyhole, but could only discover that it was a bedroom.

"That may be the bedroom occupied by Harvey Gale," Will thought to himself. "In there I may obtain some valuable information. I'll take off my shoes, and see whether the door is locked."

He removed his shoes and also his coat, and then carefully opened the door of the room.

He listened intently, but heard no sound. He stole into the hallway, and in a moment had reached the door of the adjoining room. He turned the knob very carefully, the door yielded to his touch and swung inward. The room was a richly-furnished chamber, but deserted. A glance satisfied Will that the room was the one occupied by the master of the house.

He left the door open in order that he might hear any approaching footsteps and have time to regain his room.

Besides a dressing-case and a wash-stand, there was also a small chest of drawers of antique pattern.

"If there's anything to be found here, it's in those drawers," said Will to himself, and he directed his attention to them.

He found them locked.

In view of just such a contingency and to meet it, Captain Moore had supplied him with a large set of skeleton keys, running from very small to very large.

"They're handy to get in, and as handy to get out with," the police captain had remarked.

Will tried the small sizes, and in a moment had unlocked one of the drawers.

It contained but three articles, a photograph and two newspapers that had begun to turn yellow with age.

Will picked up the photograph and looked earnestly at it.

It was the likeness of a handsome, noble-looking young man, and although the face was strange to him, there was a familiarity about the expression that struck Will very forcibly.

"Somewhere, on somebody's face, I have seen that same noble and honest expression," muttered Will. "I'll put it in my pocket and examine it again."

He picked up the two papers and looked for any marked paragraphs that they might have in their columns, but there were none to be seen.

One of the first paragraphs that did catch his eye, however, was that of a shipwreck off the coast of Jersey, wherein many lives were lost. The article contained the following lines:

"It is also worth notice that one of the survivors had a very narrow escape from death—so narrow that he escaped with body and senses alone, leaving his memory in the hands of the storm-king. He does not know himself, cannot tell his name, nor, in fact, utter a word except in imitation. His appearance is that of an American or an Englishman, but he may belong to any country. He will, like a child, be forced to begin life over again."

"Why," cried Will, "this is concerning Roger Brant. There can be no doubt about it, for this account and the one he gave me himself are identical. Why is it that I find this account so carefully preserved by Harvey Gale? What is Brant to him? Mystery—mystery on all sides; wherever I turn it meets me."

He glanced over the other paper, but found nothing that was of any interest to him. He placed the photograph and papers in his pocket.

He was about to unlock another of the drawers, when he heard the front door open and shut very plainly.

"This may be Harvey Gale," was the idea that flashed through his mind, and hastily relocking the drawer he had opened, he put his skeleton keys in his pocket, and quietly left the chamber, closing the door carefully after him.

He stood at the head of the stairs and listened.

"Home, do you say?"

The voice was Harvey Gale's, and Will recognized it.

"Yes," replied the servant. "He looks very bad. I had to help him up-stairs myself."

"Poor boy."

"He's very sick."

"He shall have the best attendance that money can get. It would kill me to lose that boy."

"He said he would go to sleep. He would not take anything, although he was quite exhausted."

"My poor boy," groaned Gale, and his tone convinced Will that the man really loved his son. "I'll take a peep at him, awake or asleep."

That was all Will waited to hear. He noiselessly darted into the room, concealed the papers and photograph under the bedclothing, and threw himself on the bed.

He turned his face away from the door, closed his eyes, and began breathing in that heavy and regular manner peculiar to most sleepers.

A moment later he heard Harvey Gale enter the room and creep to the side of the bed. He knew that his foe was looking down upon him, but he pretended to sleep on, keeping his ears open.

"My God, how bad my poor son does look," murmured Gale. "He has worried himself sick, and it may kill him yet. Strange that I, a villain, a schemer, a plotter and a criminal, should love my only child. I tried to bring him up honest, but he must have had some of my bad blood in him. What was bred in the bone was bound to come out of the flesh. Anyhow, he is safe now, and I'll keep the dear boy at home for a month, and then carry him to Europe."

Then he moved away, the door was quietly closed, and he was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"REMEMBER, YOU ARE MARKED WITH A TRIANGLE!"

Will breathed a sigh of relief when left alone.

"So far, so good," he muttered. "He will now be more prepared in his mind to recognize me as

his son when we meet face to face. Ah! he is coming back again, and there is somebody with him."

He resumed his former position on the bed and closed his eyes, but the steps passed the door, and the parties entered the next room, the one occupied by the master of the house.

"Don't talk too loud, Squibbs," Will heard Gale say, "for there's somebody sleeping in the next room."

"All right," a deep voice responded.

That was enough for Will. He was off the bed in a moment, and with stealthy footsteps he approached the door which communicated with the next room.

He tried to peer through the keyhole, but a dark form prevented him from seeing anything.

However, he could hear.

"And this is what he heard:

"What is it, Squibbs?"

"Well, I feel kind of uneasy about the gal. I think that somebody has got wind of the affair, and as spotted the crib. I could have sworn that I saw one of Robert McNaught's men spying around this afternoon."

"That will never do."

"Certainly not."

"Suppose you give her a dose of something to keep her quiet, and bring her over here about midnight."

"To this house?"

"Certainly."

"Have you got room for her, and a safe place?"

"I have a sort of strong room on the top floor, where she will be perfectly safe. It is very secure, and she can't put her head out of the window."

"Then I'll bring her over. The widow will have to come to terms, and if everything works well, we shall get the money out of her in less than three days."

The blood leaped and danced in Will's veins. He knew that they were speaking of Grace Williams.

The men were speaking again.

"Then I'd better fetch her over to-night?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll manage to get here by about twelve."

"All right, and I'll be at the door to take her from you. We will make a pretty good stake on that girl, you'll see."

Then the men arose to leave the room, and Will very hastily jumped to the bed again and lay down, ready to act his part should Gale take a peep at him, but both men went straight down-stairs.

"I shall remain here," Will decided in his own mind. "I might rescue her by following this man, Squibbs; but it will be a sure thing here, and perhaps less dangerous. I can afford to wait."

He drew out the photograph of the noble-appearing young man, and gazed long and earnestly.

"Where is it that I have seen such an expression on a man's face?" the young farmer mused.

"Oh, now I have it, this young man looks like a lion, and so does Roger Brant. There is the same noble expression. Now that I look more closely at the likeness, with this idea in my mind, I can see something of a resemblance to Brant."

He placed the photograph in his pocket, and thought long over the matter.

"I feel convinced that this portrait represented Brant in his early days," he thought.

"If this be a correct idea why is it that this rascal, Harvey Gale, should keep the likeness and also the paper containing that account of Brant's strange mental condition? He is not the man to be a friend of any but rogues, and therefore he must be an enemy to Brant. The man is not to be found. Ten to one he is now a prisoner in this very house, and the cause is another one of those mysteries that are confronting me at every turn."

The more he thought over it the more did he become convinced of the truth of his conjecture.

He knew that Brant had said to Captain Moore:

"That man (Gale) had something to do with my lost past life!"

All these facts combined to convince him, and he became positive in his own mind that if Brant was not in the house, he was at least a prisoner through the desire of Harvey Gale.

"And," said Will to himself, "I shall take a good look through this very house for my friend."

He opened the door of his room just in time to hear Gale say:

"I shall not be back until twelve o'clock, and if you feel like it you can go to bed."

"All right," responded a voice, which Will recognized as that of the man who had admitted him; then the front door opened and closed, and a moment later the servant came walking up-stairs.

Will threw himself upon the bed once more, and pretended to be sleeping soundly.

The man thrust his head in at the door, gave utterance to an expression of satisfaction, and then closed the door softly, and Will could hear him ascending the next flight of stairs, muttering about being "dead gone with sleep."

"Good enough," thought the young man, "I shall have quite a clear field for my work."

He concluded not to put his shoes on, as he could move around stealthily in his stockings.

He made up his mind to begin at the bottom of the house and investigate it thoroughly up to the top.

He reached the parlor floor, saw nobody, heard nothing, and was emboldened to descend to the lower floor.

When he reached the basement hall he found a small light burning, and the doors of the front and back rooms open.

He peered in and saw they were deserted. Just then, in the very intense stillness, he heard a sound that seemed to him to be a muffled cough.

He listened.

Again came the sound, then came a strange murmur, like the voice of the sighing wind.

"I have heard that sound before now," thought Will. "I heard a man groaning when in the cell allotted to condemned murderers at Sing Sing, and the sound was just the same as this. I wonder if it comes from the cellar. I'll see."

He lit a kerosene-lamp that he found in the kitchen, and then walked down the cellar stairs.

The first thing that caught his eye in the cellar, was a square structure of bricks, about eight feet on all sides, and built up against the regular chimney-work.

It was about nine feet high, had a circular door of about two feet in diameter on one side, and a square little door of about eight inches on all sides at another part. The door was made of iron; the larger was locked, and resisted all efforts to open it. The smaller one had merely a latch, and when Will lifted this it swung open, revealing a square hole behind it.

"Have you come again, monster?" cried a voice from the inside, and Brant's face appeared at the opening.

"Brant!"

"Will!"

And then they both stared at each other, until Will cried:

"Yes, it is I. You are a prisoner, and I am here to liberate you. Time is more precious than gold now; there is an ax on the floor. I'll take it and batter in this wall."

"Do it!" cried Brant.

Will set the lamp down in the square opening and preparatory to doing the heavy work he stripped off his upper garments. As he bent down to seize the ax his white shoulders shone in the lamplight, and Brant cried out:

"Ah, there it is again. Ah, I know it now; the veil is torn aside; the past is revealed to me. Oh, my God! that dizzy oblivion is coming over me again, and the blessed boon is receding from my grasp. Will, Will— Ah! I am fainting, Will, my boy, remember you are 'marked with a triangle!'

CHAPTER XIX.

DOING THE SLEEP-WALKING ACT.

As he uttered the words Brant fell prostrate to the floor of his dungeon cell, totally unconscious.

"You are marked with a triangle!"

The sentence rung in Will's ears, and thrilled him. He knew that he was marked with a triangle on the shoulder, and had often admired the perfect shape of the mark.

"But what is there about my mark to affect him in such a remarkable manner?" muttered Will. "Now I think of it, he must have seen the triangle on the night that I first met him, when I stood in front of the furnace fire, drying my clothing. Poor fellow, how am I to get him out?"

He peered into the hole, and saw Brant lying on his back, as motionless as a log.

"He shall not stay there," said Will to himself, and picking up the lamp, he placed it in a favorable spot, then seized the ax that was lying on the ground, and struck at the bricks.

He avoided the parts nearest to the spot where the man lay, and rained his blows thick and fast on the walls of the cellar dungeon.

Of course the blows were heavy and resounded through the house with a booming sound that was far-reaching.

Will was so worked up by the exciting nature of the late scene that he forgot about the probability of bringing somebody else to the spot by the loud noise he was making.

He had forgotten all about the man-servant upstairs, and was very much startled when the latter put a restraining hand on his arm and called out:

"Master Charley, what are you doing?"

Will turned, recognized the servant, and stood with the ax raised in his hands.

For a moment he was undecided what to do.

Should he play possum, and give some excuse for his presence in the cellar, or should he strike down the man who stood at his side and endeavor to rescue Brant?

"I'll rescue the man," he decided in his own mind. "I've gone too far now to recede."

"What do you want here?" asked the servant.

"Your life, if it stands in the course to victory!" cried Will, and turning the handle of the ax in his hand he struck down at the man.

The turn that he had given it was sufficient to cause the weapon to strike on one of its flat sides. To have struck a heavy blow with either the blunt or sharp end would have been murderous.

The steel descended upon the unprotected head of the servant and stretched him out at Will's feet as stiff as a rail.

Then the stalwart young farmer paused.

What next?

The man at his feet was stunned, that was all.

What should he do with him?

"I'll bind him as well as I can, and stop his mouth, too," Will decided, after a moment's deliberation, and seizing the lamp he searched the cellar for rope.

He soon found several pieces of rope, and also a large cork that lay on the floor.

With a piece of rope he bound the man in a very secure manner, and then put the large cork into the victim's mouth, and bound a handkerchief tightly over his mouth, knotting it at the back of his head.

The servant was now bound and gagged in a manner that made it impossible for him to either move or speak.

Then Will took his prisoner by the shoulder and dragged him to a dark corner of the cellar.

He then returned, procured the lamp to aid him, and going back to the unconscious servant, the

young man piled boards, boxes and barrels around him in such a manner that he could not be seen.

"That settles you," said Will. "I'm going on with my work, and if it brings down any more, I'll serve them the same as I did him."

He thrust the light into the dungeon, and saw that Brant still lay on the ground insensible.

"That is a deep swoon," muttered Will. "If I don't get him out and revive him, he may never recover, but die unconscious."

Putting down the lamp, he seized the ax once more, and began showering his heavy blows against the solid brick wall.

In a few minutes he had smashed a large hole through one side of the strange cell.

Tired from his rapid work, he let the ax drop and rested. Just at that moment a strong light shone down upon him and he heard a voice say:

"Here, in the cellar."

"I can see somebody there," a second voice asserted.

"Yes, and it's my boy," said another voice which Will recognized as that of Gale.

The three speakers stood at the top of the cellar-stairs, shedding the strong glare of the bull's-eye lantern upon him.

Will did not look up, so quickly was his plan of defense formed in his mind. He put on his shirt.

"Three to one," he thought. "I can't compete with them, so I must fool them."

"What are you doing, Charley?" Harvey Gale called down to him.

Pretending that he did not hear, the young farmer seized the ax and pounded away once more at the brick walls.

"Why, there's something amiss with that boy," he heard Gale say, and then the three men came down the cellar-stairs, and Gale came up close to Charley.

"Charley Charley," he repeated, "what are you trying to do?"

Still Will kept swinging the ax, and raining his heavy blows against the barrier that separated him from Brant.

"Charley!" again cried Gale, and caught his arm.

Then Will shrieked out as though terribly alarmed or suddenly frightened, staggered, and would have fallen had not Gale caught him in his arms.

"Why," cried one of the men, "he's been asleep."

"So he has," cried Gale. "My poor boy."

And Will stared around as though astonished.

"Father!" he gasped.

"Yes, my boy," Gale responded.

"How did I come here?"

"I don't know. You were asleep, I suppose."

"I must have been," murmured Will, in a weary tone.

"I did the same thing up in the country, and nearly killed people in my sleep."

Harvey Gale, thinking that he was referring to Charley's last place of exile, patted him softly on the back.

"Never mind," he said, "you'll soon get over these attacks. They only come from nervousness."

"Take me to my room, father. I feel terribly exhausted."

"No wonder trying to batter down this wall."

And then he took Will by the arm, and the stalwart young farmer leaned on him, and suffered the hoodwinked Gale to lead him up to the second floor.

When he got to his room he dropped upon the bed and murmured:

"I shall be all right now. Let me rest."

"All right, my son," replied Harvey. "Go to bed and rest. Good-night."

"Good-night, father."

Harvey Gale departed.

Will heard Gale descending the stairs, but was ignorant of what took place below.

"That little dodge worked like a charm, and it is plain that he thinks I am his son," soliloquized Will.

"What is to be done now? I smashed a hole through that brick wall that was nearly large enough to let a man crawl out. Now, will they repair my damage, or will they take the shorter remedy of removing Brant?"

He longed to go down-stairs so as to be able to hear what was said in reference to the prisoner; but there was too much danger for him to run. The progress he had made thus far was gratifying, and he did not want to arouse suspicion.

He listened for some time, and he heard the sound of heavy blows, and after a time the noise ceased.

Then, after the lapse of a short interval, the three men came up the basement stairs.

Will could not see them, and he was about to venture down, when they ascended the stairs that led to the parlor floor, and he ran into his room and closed the door.

He thought they were coming up further, but to his surprise he heard Gale say:

"Well, it's all serene now, so we'll get out."

"All right," said the other, and Will heard them leave the house by the front door.

Will waited until he was assured that they were gone, then he ran down the stairs. In the hall, near the foot of the stairs, there stood a bull's-eye lantern.

The young man caught it up, saw that it was still alight, and ran down into the cellar.

He ran to the cell, thrust the lantern through the breach he had made, and looked for Brant.

Brant was not there!

Where was he?

CHAPTER XX.

A RESCUE.

BRANT was gone, that was sure; but where, Will had not the faintest idea.

The three men might have taken him out of the house when they went out, or they might have secreted him in some fresh hiding-place.

Will shed the light of the lantern all over the cellar. There was not one hiding-place visible to his eyes.

He slowly ascended the stairs, and glancing in at the clock on the kitchen mantle, he saw that it was nearly twelve.

"They may soon be here with the girl," thought Will. "I'd better get up-stairs without delay, or they'll catch me down here, and have their suspicions aroused."

So he ran up at once, placed the lantern in the hall where he had found it, and then went to his room.

He opened the door slightly and sat there listening.

Ten minutes passed by, and then a key grated in the lock of the front door, and he heard the sound of several footsteps.

"Take her right up to the top of the house," he heard Gale say, and then the party came walking up the stairs.

Will kept the door a trifle open still and peered out cautiously.

He saw two men bearing the form of a young girl between them, and the plotter, Gale, walking behind them carrying the lantern in his hand.

Will could not see the face of the girl, and therefore was not positive that it was Grace Williams, but he had small doubts of its being the widow's pretty daughter.

They went past the door and up the next flight of stairs.

Will wished that he could follow them but he did not want to risk anything now.

In a few moments he heard them coming down again.

He peeped out and saw only Gale and one other.

Where was the third man?

"They must have left him behind to guard the girl," was the idea that struck Will. "By Jove, I have got to do some fighting if they have left a sentinel up there. Ah! what is Harvey saying?"

"It's very strange," Gale was saying to his companion as they went past Will's door. "He is not a man to walk away and leave the house unprotected unless he had some good reason. Maybe he missed the boy and went to look for him. I shall have to go around for an hour and try to hunt him up."

"I understand it," muttered Will. "He is talking about the man that lies bound and gagged in the cellar."

Will listened.

They went down-stairs and out of the house at once.

"This is a splendid chance for me," the young farmer decided. "While he is hunting for his man I shall be on equal terms with the sentinel he has left up-stairs. Brant I do not know where to find, this prisoner I do know where to find, and so I shall lose no time in trying to rescue her and put her in Moore's care."

Just as he was about to leave the room an idea struck him.

The man that had been left to guard the prisoner up stairs was one of those who had seen him in the cellar.

They believed him to be a sleep-walker! Why not make capital of this false belief?

"I can do it," Will decided. "I'll make that chap think I've got a fresh spell on me again, and in a manner I'll have the best of the bargain. As a somnambulist I can walk very close to him, and as a healthy and wide-awake young man I can give him a smash between the eyes that will take all the fight out of him at the start."

The idea seemed so good to his mind that he hastened to put it into execution.

He opened one of the numerous bureau-drawers and soon found a long night-shirt, or gown.

This long, white garment, reaching from his neck to his heels, he put on over his other clothing, and it gave him a very somnambulistic sort of look.

He had a revolver that had been given him by Moore. It was one of the short, heavy five shooters that are known as "pepper-boxes."

This weapon, concealed in the wide sleeve of the night-gown, was the one he intended to use on the sentinel up-stairs.

When he was ready he turned around for a small lamp that he could carry in his hand, and found one on the shelf.

He did not light the lamp, but carried it in his hand, just as a sleep-walker would do.

Then up the stairs he went with a slow, deliberate step.

The gas was alight in all the three halls, and Will could see where he was going.

He held the lamp in front of him with his left hand, and in his right hand was clutched the pistol.

When he reached the top of the stairs he stared straight ahead of him in a fixed manner, and with slow, deliberate steps began to pace along the hall.

The guard, who was sitting alone in a chair, caught sight of him.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed, "here comes the young fellow walking about in his sleep again."

Will saw that the deception had taken well.

He stared straight ahead; the guard sat still and stared at him.

Will reached the fellow, who was very far from suspecting danger, and with a swift motion raised his hand, and struck down at the guard.

The latter cried out, and put up one hand in a vain effort to ward off the blow.

The heavy "pepper-box" struck him with great force on the top of his head, and he fell from the chair.

Flat upon his stomach and face the unfortunate sentinel fell, and when Will bent down he could see that the man had been knocked senseless.

"He is a powerful chap, and I might have had a great deal of trouble with him," muttered the young farmer, as he looked down upon his prostrate foe. "Now that I have him all right, what am I to do with him? Where can I put him?"

This was a puzzler.

Will looked around. He saw a door immediately on his right.

He opened it, and saw a bedroom, with the bed nearly made.

"That will do!" cried Will.

He rushed into the room, pulled off the bed-clothing, threw the sheet aside, and then laid the rest of the spreads smoothly on the floor.

Hastily searching the man's pockets, he found a cigar-holder case and linen handkerchief.

His cigar-holder case was oblong, about two inches long, and nearly an inch in width. The handkerchief was new, large and strong.

Will clapped the case in the man's mouth and tied the handkerchief over his lips, and knotted it at the back of the victim's head.

"That gags you," cried Will.

Then he laid the man on the quilts, rolled him up in them so that the poor fellow's head only was seen, and tied the sheets securely about the other covers.

"That binds you," said Will.

Then he lifted the man up like a bundle in his arms, carried him into the room, threw him on the bed, left him there, went out, locked the door, and threw the key to the far end of the hall.

"That disposes of you," was Will's final remark.

Then he went along the hall until he found another door.

He tried it, and found it was locked.

He rapped loudly on the panels, and called out:

"Miss Williams, Grace, I am a friend who has come to rescue you. Are you there?"

No answer.

"Poor thing," muttered Will, "she may be insensible, for they probably gave her some drug before they brought her here. I'll break the door down."

He placed one shoulder against the door, and braced his right foot by means of the baluster.

Then he pushed with all his might, and with a loud crash in went the door.

The light from the passage was quite bright enough for Will to see into the room and to discover the form of a young girl lying on the floor. He ran in, caught her up in his arms, and took her out into the hallway.

"The same face," he cried. "It is the girl that I tried to rescue before."

He carried her down stairs and into his room.

How should he take her away?

She was totally unconscious, and might remain so for two hours. All his efforts to revive her proved of no avail.

"I must get a carriage," concluded Will, and throwing off the night-gown that had done him such good service he hastily put on his coat and hat.

He ran down-stairs and out of the house, leaving the door slightly open, and just as he reached the street a carriage came along. Will saw by the numbers on the lighted lamps that it was a public hack.

"Here, hack, hold on," he cried.

The driver pulled up.

"Empty or full?" asked Will.

"Empty, sir."

"Then draw up to the curb. I've got a sick young lady, who just fainted, and must be taken home to New York."

In two minutes he and the unconscious girl were in the hack and rattling toward the ferry.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION.

CAPTAIN MOORE had only reached the door of his dwelling when a hack drove up.

He had just left the police-station, and felt like going to sleep.

He was about entering the door, taking no note of the cab, when Will's familiar voice reached his ears.

"Hold on."</

replied Moore, who wanted to make good his claim.

"Ah!" cried Grace, "there stands the young man who tried to rescue me on the highway."

"And who completed the job about an hour ago," Will added.

"Oh, I must have a talk alone with her," said the mother; "then we will come in again, tell you all, thank you as you should be thanked, and decide what we will do."

"All right," assented Will, who wanted to talk with Moore.

"I'll not go before I thank this brave young man," spoke up Grace, and she placed her hand in his and told him how grateful she was.

"I may claim more than your mere gratitude," murmured Will, and with a deep blush on her cheek the pretty girl left him.

"Now," said Moore, "just tell me what you have done."

"Established myself as Charley Gale, and discovered these."

And with these words, he held out the portrait and the papers he had taken from Harvey Gale's room.

"Do you know that face?" he asked of Moore.

The latter started the instant his eyes fell on the photograph.

"Yes, I do."

"Who is it?"

"The photograph is of the young man who married my sister."

"His name?"

"Reginald Sands."

"The expression of the face is very much like Roger Brant's."

"So it is."

"Where is Reginald Sands?"

"God alone knows. He went to Europe, and I think he must have died there, for we never heard anything from him."

"When was that?"

"In 1874."

"Aha! read that."

And he pointed to the paragraph that stated the particulars of Brant's strange case.

The captain read it attentively, and then turned to Will.

"That certainly refers to Brant?"

"Positively."

"And this picture of my brother-in-law, Reginald Sands, does slightly resemble the man in expression, although not in general appearance."

"Remember," remarked Will, "he does not know who he is."

"True."

"And when you first saw his face it was familiar."

"True," assented Moore. "I noticed a certain familiarity in his face that never struck me afterward."

"Because what was striking at the first glance wore off when you continued looking at the man," went on Will. "Now it struck me that it was very curious to find this photograph and also the newspaper item treasured up in Gale's house. I know that Brant looked upon him as one connected with his past life, and all this set me thinking. What should make Gale keep those things locked away unless they were of interest to him?"

"There is a good deal in that," admitted Moore. "Now, if you had found Brant in the house, I should have thought that there was a great deal more in it."

"I did find him," Will returned.

"What?"

"Yes, and came very near rescuing him," the young farmer added.

"Let me tell you the story."

And while Moore listened with intense interest, he recounted to him all that had taken place in the Gale Mansion, ending up with the story of finding Brant in the brick cell.

"And," concluded Will, "I had just got ready for the heavy work, when he suddenly threw up his hands, raved a bit, shouted a strange request to me, and fell back in a swoon."

"What did he say?"

"The request to me?"

"Yes."

"Why, he told me to remember a thing that I know too well for me to forget it. He shouted:

"Will, remember you are marked with a triangle!"

"What?" fairly shrieked Moore, and leaped to his feet shaking with excitement. "Did you say that you are marked with a triangle?"

"I certainly am, right here on my shoulder." And in a moment he had stripped off his shirt and exposed the red birth-mark.

Moore was so overcome for a moment that he was unable to utter a word.

"Boy," he burst forth, at length, "I have searched for you many and many a year."

"For me?"

And now it was Will's turn to be amazed.

"Yes, for you. That sister, of whom I spoke a moment ago, called me to her death-bed, told me that her little boy had been stolen from her, told me that he was named for me, and asked me with her last breath never to give up the search for her child. She knew I would find him, for he was marked with a triangle!"

"Then," faintly said Will, "I must be that child, and you are—"

"Your Uncle James."

Their hands met in a cordial clasp, and Will sat down with his head in a whirl.

"The mystery that surrounds you, the fact that the people you once thought your parents cruelly

deserted you once and tried to swear your life away, all goes to prove that you are undoubtedly my sister's child."

"How strange it all seems," murmured Will. "And my mother is dead?"

"Yes."

"How I should have loved her had she lived," murmured Will. "It is awful to lose one's parents before they are even known."

"Parents," cried Captain Moore. "I only call it parent. You have not lost your father, you have only lost your mother. You forget what I told you a few moments ago."

"What about?"

"My sister. I told you that the man she married went to sea and never was heard from in any way afterward. But now you have come to me with clews, and you have backed them up with theories that were good at the start, but which are now convincing in the light of your own identity."

"Speak plainly," Will requested.

"Why," cried Moore, "you believe Brant to be the original of this photograph, and if you are right, then he is the long-lost Reginald Sands, and your father!"

CHAPTER XXII.

GRIPPING THE THROAT OF HIS FOE!

WHEN Captain Moore and his newly-found nephew went to Brooklyn, which they did soon after their intensely interesting conversation, they took with them three of the most trustworthy and reliable officers in the precinct.

"We may have to meet with some of Billy Schemer's brutes," said Moore, "and we should be prepared. Where can we put the men?"

"In the cellar will be about the best place," replied Will. "You must arrange some signal with them, so that they will show up in time when they're wanted."

"I can fix that," rejoined Moore.

When they arrived at the Gale Mansion, Will found that it looked the same outside as when he had left it, barely two hours previously.

"I guess the coast is clear," said he to Moore. "In all probability Gale is still out, looking for his man."

"Or, perhaps, having returned and discovered your absence, he may be looking for you," suggested Moore.

"Very likely," assented Will. "Let us get inside. If he be there now, we can bring him to bay, and if not, I can meet him when he comes in, and I'll choke some truth out of him, too."

"That's the idea," chimed in Moore. "You must take him by the throat."

"I'll do it," said Will.

He ascended the steps and tried the front door. It yielded to his touch, and opened in response to the slight push he gave it.

"I left it unlocked, and its being unlocked now is pretty good proof that Gale has not returned," said Will. "Come in."

They all walked into the hallway, and Will closed the door.

Everything was in the same state as when he had left it. The lantern was still resting on the floor in the hall, and he picked it up.

"Now to stow the men away," he said to Moore. "Then I'll go to my room and wait until Gale comes in. You can stay with me, and when he enters the house you can get behind the bureau."

"All right," said Moore.

Down into the cellar they went, and Will at once looked for the man he had left there.

He found him just as he had left him. The fellow blinked when the light of the lantern was shed upon him, but the champagne cork in his mouth prevented him from uttering a word.

"He's secure," Will decided.

Then he showed Moore the place where Brandt had been confined.

"I wonder if he is still a prisoner in this house?" Moore questioned. "What do you think?"

"I think that he is, but the best way for us to do is to wait until I stand face to face with Gale and force him to reveal Brant's whereabouts."

"You are quite right. That is the best way for us."

Leaving the men in the cellar, with orders to keep perfectly quiet until signaled for, Moore and Will went up-stairs.

They had just reached the room which the young farmer had so recently vacated, when the front door was opened.

"Quick, get inside, and hide behind that bureau," advised Will. "I'll try and get a peep at him."

Moore concealed himself, and Will crept to the balusters.

"Strange," he heard Gale mutter, in a tone that indicated perplexity. "I could have sworn that I locked that door when I left the house. Maybe I forgot it in my excitement. I'll go up-stairs and see if the boy is all right, and then I'll look after the others."

"The others," muttered Will. "That means Grace Williams and Brandt. One is out of his power, and the other will soon be."

He sat down on a chair and soon heard Gale coming up-stairs to him.

He was evidently surprised to see his supposed son sitting there when he thought him in bed.

"What, up again, Charley?" he asked, and advanced to where he was sitting, and laid his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder.

It was evident that this man, villain though he was, loved his son with a deep affection.

Will turned upon him like a flash, and caught him by the throat with his right hand.

He had just such a grip as might reasonably be expected from such a stalwart young farmer, and when his fingers closed on Gale's throat, the latter had but small chance of getting away.

To tell the truth the rascal was so much surprised that for an instant he was incapable of resistance.

Then he sputtered forth:

"Charley—Charley, what do you mean by such conduct!"

Will forced him backward, and with a dexterous movement of his foot tripped him up, and threw him on the bed, still retaining his grip on Gale's throat.

Then he looked down upon the astonished man and hissed out:

"I'm not Charley. I am your worst foe, as bitter an enemy to you as you have been to me. Look at me well, and you will see that I am not your son."

"And then look at me," quietly said Captain Moore, stepping out from behind the bureau and walking up to the bed. "Do you think your son would be with me?"

Gale cast a searching glance at Will.

"I have been duped," he cried. "You are not my son."

"Of course not," said Will. "Your son, the real murderer, has changed places with me. He occupies a cell in jail, and in due course of time he will be hung for the murder that he committed. I am somebody else's son, and with my hand on your dastardly throat, I ask you whose son am I?"

"How can I know?" returned the villain. "You are a perfect stranger to me."

"Villain!" cried Will, tightening his grasp. "You do know, and I will have the truth from you. I feel in a murderous mood, when I think of your villainy, and could enjoy throttling you. The truth—the truth, you inhuman fiend, or you'll die with the lie in your throat!"

"I don't know," gasped Harvey Gale, the blood growing purple red in his face.

"Choke him," growled Captain Moore. "Kill the rascal if he will not tell the truth."

"He's a doomed man," resolutely said Will. "Either he answers me truthfully, or else he never leaves this room alive."

Gale maintained a stubborn silence for some time, but Will kept on with his choking process, and the rascal began to realize that he was being killed.

He could not speak, but he raised his hands in token of submission, and Captain Moore said:

"Let him up."

Will removed his hand, and the half-choked man sat on the bed.

The young farmer drew a knife and held it above his head while his enemy was regaining his lost breath.

"Harvey Gale," he said slowly and sternly, "I shall not try such a slow process as choking you again. Answer my question, and truly, and don't trifile with me, or I'll sheathe this blade in your dastardly heart. For the last time—

"Whose son am I?"

The other hesitated a moment, and then slowly and reluctantly spoke the words that the young man was longing to hear.

"Your first name I don't know, but your father's name was Reginald Sands."

Will looked at Moore, and the police captain looked at him. It was evident that they were getting at the truth.

"And where is my father?" demanded the young man.

"He is dead," answered Gale. "He was lost at sea, and has not been heard from in twenty years."

"That is false!" sternly responded Will. "If Reginald Sands was lost at sea, who then is Roger Brant, the man you have made a prisoner?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

LIVELY WORK.

HARVEY GALE turned very pale, and looked furiously from the young farmer to Moore, who eyed him like a hawk.

"Come," growled Will, "it is useless for you to beat about the bush. You know that I am aware of the fact of his imprisonment here, for you found me trying to liberate him. Come, Billy Schemer speak out, and don't tempt me to lay my hand on your throat again."

"You can see that we know you as well as can be put in Moore."

"We have taken away your prisoner on the top floor, and she is now with her mother."

Gale ground his teeth with an exhibition of baffled rage.

"Speak out!" impatiently cried the young farmer.

"Who is this Roger Brant?"

"He is—Curse you! You'll never find out now." For at that instant the door was flung open and three men who were associated with him in crime entered the room.

discharged one chamber, the bullet bringing down some white flakes.

"I merely wanted to show you that the weapon was loaded," said he to the men. "The first man who attempts to draw a weapon will get bullet number two!"

The shot he had discharged, however, was really a signal to the police in the cellar.

"You are three to our two," continued Moore, "but we have the best of the situation. We are exactly one move ahead. Will!"

"Yes."

"You just keep your eye on our amiable host while I march these gentlemen down-stairs."

The captain's idea was to meet his little guard on the way, and thus get the rascals between two fires, when they would be forced to surrender.

"I'll look after him," spoke up Will, in answer to Moore.

The latter drew another revolver and deliberately cocked it.

"Now, you rascals," he shouted to the three men, "attention!"

Held motionless by the revolvers so promptly drawn by him and Will, they had not been able to make an offensive movement.

They could only glare at the two intruders. Their profound respect for bullets would not permit the rascals to move.

"Now, then!" cried Moore, "I am keeping my eyes on you. I shall not hesitate about firing upon any one of you that attempts to draw a weapon. Right about face!"

Controlled by the revolvers, awed by the determined tone and resolute face of the speaker, the men obeyed, and turned their backs to him.

"Forward, mar—"

Crack—smash!

Then a scuffle!

"Police down here!"

All this came from below, just as Captain Moore was giving his order, and he understood the meaning of it at once.

His men coming up-stairs from the cellar had come into collision with some of the members of Harvey Gale's gang.

His mind was made up in less than two seconds.

"Come on, Will!" he cried. "Let him be. The men are in danger."

"Not I," said Will. "I'll not let the rascal escape. I want him here if I come back."

Hoping to profit by the excitement, the chief rascal had jumped up.

He had just got upon his feet when Will caught him a stunning blow on the side of the head with the butt of the heavy revolver, striking him with such terrific force that Gale fell back upon the bed totally unconscious.

"You'll be there when I come back, I reckon," grimly muttered Will, and then he turned to follow Moore, who was just disappearing from view through the doorway.

Gale's men had rushed down-stairs when they heard the cry of "police" from below.

As Will darted out of the room he was thoughtful enough to pick up a heavy chair, knowing from experience that it was a weapon which he could use to good effect.

He was close behind Moore, and got to the bottom of the stairs almost as soon as the captain.

This was the scene:

A man lay prostrate in the hallway, and over his form three policemen were contending with three rough-looking fellows, regular cut throats in appearance.

The men who had entered Harvey Gale's room now rush to the assistance of their pals and Will and Moore went to the aid of the officers.

"Down with 'em!" cried Moore, and leaped forward.

"Down with 'em!" echoed Will, and as he rushed upon the foe he swung his chair over his head.

This latter proved to be a weapon against which the rascals were not able to make a defense.

Will aimed a sweeping blow at them, the chair hummed through the air and descended.

Two of the rascals were knocked senseless, and a third was struck off his balance by the sweeping blow of the heavy piece of furniture in Will's hands.

They all made a rush at him as the antagonist most to be feared, but the powerful young farmer met them bravely.

In his strong grasp the chair was a mere toy. He raised it swiftly and struck again as they rushed upon him.

He leveled another one, and at the same instant caught sight of a rascal who was aiming at Moore with a pistol.

With a forward lunge he hurled the chair at the man, catching the brute on the arm and knocking the pistol from his hand.

Before the fellow could recover his balance Moore had him by the throat and was banging his head against the wall.

Meantime the policemen were not idle.

Will's peculiar attack had utterly demoralized the rascals, and now it was comparatively easy work for the officers.

Will leant a hand, and they were soon secured.

There was a good supply of both handcuffs and cords among the policemen, and in a very short time the seven rascals, conscious or unconscious, were declared to be well secured.

"These men," said Moore to his nephew, "will undoubtedly split upon Gale, and reveal enough of his villainy to send him to prison for life."

"Hark!" Will requested.

"What?"

"I heard a sound that appeared to me to be a faint cry."

"Listen all," Moore commanded.
All were silent.

"Help!"
The cry was faint, yet they all heard the word distinctly enough.

"Where did it come from?" was the question from all.

As though in answer to them, a loud crash was heard in the parlor on their right, and then again came the cry:

"Help!"
Moore threw open the door, and they all ran into the large room.

An immense wardrobe, high and broad, lay upon the floor, and from within the huge piece of furniture came sounds that very plainly indicated a struggle of some sort.

"There's somebody in there!" cried Will. "Set it up, men, and liberate the prisoner."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

WILLING hands soon lifted the wardrobe, and set it up straight in the middle of the room, but it was all that four men could do to handle the piece of furniture, so solidly was it constructed.

The doors were locked, but Captain Moore, when he found that he could not force the lock with his hands, at once produced a small chisel. With this he pried open the two doors and forced the lock; the occupant of the wardrobe stumbled out in a blinded manner, his eyes dazzled by the light.

It was Roger Brant!

"I thought so," cried Will.

"So did I," put in Moore. "I had an idea that he was in there when I found that it was inhabited. How are you, Brant?"

"Moore?" cried Brant.

"Yes, Moore and Will," returned the police captain.

Brant, an anxious expression on his face, turned to Will.

"My boy," he asked "did I not see a peculiar mark on your shoulder when you were trying to liberate me?"

"You did, and bade me remember that I was marked with a triangle, a thing that I could not have easily forgotten."

"Do you know who you are?" asked the other.

"I do not know positively, but I think I am your son," replied the young farmer, and a tear stood in his eye.

"You are!" cried the recently liberated man. "I know myself at last, and your peculiar birth-mark has been the means of tearing away the veil that has obscured the eyes of memory for many long years. I know that my name is Reginald Sands, and that you are my son, the same babe that I left in my dear wife's arms when I went away to Florida, eighteen years ago. Ah, yes, it is all clear now."

"I am not taken wholly by surprise, for I have known that you were my father a short time," said Will. "In the room above there lies a man whom you may recognize as none other than Harvey Gale."

"My jailer," shuddered the man we must now call Reginald Sands. "Oh, what a terrible den was that into which he thrust me. I fancied I knew that man the first time I saw him, and I said that, to the best of my belief, he was in some manner connected with my earlier life. I made that remark—"

"To me," said the police captain "And my name is James Moore. Have you any idea who I am now?"

He faced Sands, and the latter looked steadily for a moment.

"Your face has always been familiar to me," he returned. "But I really cannot recall it. However, your name is a suggestive one to me now, with my lost memory restored, and I believe you are the brother of the girl I married."

"Right!" assented Moore. "I am your Mary's brother."

Their hands met in fraternal clasp.

"And Mary," asked Sands, "where is she?"

"She has been in heaven about eighteen years," solemnly returned Moore. "She died while you were on the sea."

"My poor wife!" murmured Sands, and a tear dimmed his eyes when he learned that his bride was gone from earth forever."

"Never mind, father," affectionately said Will, "I am left to you."

"And for you, my noble boy, I will live the rest of my years," returned his father.

"Come," said Moore, "I want to interview this Gale. There is a mystery to be cleared up, and he is the man to do it."

They all marched up-stairs and entered the room where they had left Harvey Gale.

The blow Will had given him with the pistol had kept the rascal insensible up to that moment, and just as they entered the room he sat up on the bed, regarding them in a bewildered manner.

"You?" he cried, his eyes lighting on Reginald Sands.

The latter regarded him fixedly for a moment.

"Wretch," he slowly enunciated, "at last you are known to me, and my fingers fairly itch to grasp your throat."

Gale cowered before him, and trembled visibly.

"Who is he?" cried Moore, and Will echoed the question.

"My brother," replied Sands. "My own brother, natural in birth, but as unnatural in nature."

"Your brother?"

"Yes, my brother, Harvey Sands, the son of my father."

"Then I understand it all now, as plainly as can be," put in Will, his face lighting up. "The young man who committed the murder for which I was arrested and thrown into prison is really my first cousin, which accounts for the strong resemblance between us. The sons of brothers oftentimes resemble one another much more strongly than do the brothers themselves."

"Quite right," decided Moore. "You have got the hang of it, and this probably accounts in some way for that rascal yonder putting you out to board with Waters after he stole you—for steal you he certainly did. Speak out, you villain! you're cornered, so confess and beg for mercy."

"That's sound advice," announced Will. "You are at the end of your rope, and it is impossible for you to lengthen the career of villainy you have run. I'll lead you off. Didn't you steal me from my mother?"

"Yes, I did," confessed the rascal, who was now humbled to the dust.

"For what reason?"

"Your father's marriage with your mother was a secret one. I secured and destroyed the records, and the clergyman who united them died of old age. There was no proof of the marriage left, consequently the wife could not claim a share of the old man's property, or claim your inheritance after the death of your brother. It was reported that Reginald was lost at sea. I, of course, knew that he lived, and was the man with the lost memory who was cared for by the fisherman on the Jersey coast, for I went to see him, but I made up my mind that he never could recall the past, and gave myself no uneasiness about him. However, as I said, I destroyed the proofs of the marriage, and then removed you, the child and legal heir to my elder brother's property, inherited from his father. In this way I became possessed of the estate and fortune, and under my hands it was doubled. I have made a clean breast of it. What are you going to do with me and my boy?"

"With your boy," answered Reginald, "we have nothing to do. The law must deal with him. As for you, I forego the vengeance that I long to take, and simply say to you: Go, and never let me see your face again. In His own good time the Almighty will avenge my wrongs."

But little more remains to tell.

Harvey Sands's wayward son committed suicide in his cell, an awful example to young men who are tempted to tamper with their employers' money.

He was the one being whom Harvey loved, and when he learned of his son's death he began drinking deeply, and in less than a month died in a fit of delirium tremens—a fit end for a villain.

Captain Moore married the Widow Williams; and Will, while courting Grace, took a trip up to the old farm, but found that the Waterses had disappeared, probably fearing his vengeance.

And so, reader, ends the great drama of Will Waters's life, brought to a most happy conclusion through the instrumentality of the triangular mark.

THE END.

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers,
 98 William Street, New York.